

CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

AND

CHRISTIAN DUTIES;

SUGGESTED INTO

MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

By the Venerable and Right Reverend
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PART IV.

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Blessed is the man—whose will is in the law of the Lord, and he shall meditate on his law day and night.

And he shall be like a tree, which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.

And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper. Psalm i. 1, 2, 3.



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OF
VOLUME IV.

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CONSIDERATIONS
ON
CHRISTIAN TRUTHS, AND CHRISTIAN DUTIES;
OR
MEDITATIONS
FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

OCTOBER 1. *Thou shalt not steal.*

CONSIDER first, that by this commandment, God forbids all manner of wrong to our neighbour, in his goods, rights, or worldly possessions, whether by open violence, or by fraud; by stealing, or by over-reaching; by cheating in buying, or in selling, or in any other bargain; by keeping from him what is his, or not giving him his dues; or not paying just debts; or by any extortion whatsoever; or any usury in the loan of money, or other things; or by putting him to any unjust charges; or by spoiling, or damaging what belongs to him. In all these cases there is an injustice committed, which is not only condemned by this divine precept, but by the natural, and eternal law, written from the beginning in the heart of man; and by that great principle of morality, which forbids us to do by any other, what we would not have done to us. And yet how many ways are poor mortals daily guilty of breaking through this divine and eternal law, for the sake of the wretched *mammon* of worldly interest, the great

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great *god of this world*; and that in spite both of law, and gospel; honour, and honesty; conscience, and religion? And how often do they affect to deceive themselves herein with vain pleas and pretexts, invented on purpose to cloak their guilt, and to hide it, if possible, not only from others, but also from their own consciences; that so they may go on without disturbance in *the way that leads to death*, by persuading themselves that all is right. But God is not to be deceived, who has declared that *the unjust shall never possess his kingdom*, 1. Cor. vi. 9. O! Examine yourselves, Christians, impartially, upon this head of justice in your dealings with your neighbours: for there is nothing more easy than for you to deceive yourselves herein; the consequences of which would be most dreadful to your souls.

Consider 2dly, that every breach of this commandment, by any one of these ways of wronging one's neighbour, is always followed with the strict obligation of making restitution, or of repairing, to the full, the loss or damage he has suffered, without which restitution or reparation the crime will never be forgiven. And how few think of this? Alas, how many of these restitutions will be to be made, when *time shall be no more*; and when that which has been neglected on earth, shall be exacted in hell. Ah! sinners, what a load then have you charged upon your own shoulders by your injustices? And how is it possible you should think so little of discharging it! O do not be too easy in persuading yourselves you have it not in your power to make this restitution: you cannot deceive the all-seeing eye, of him, who clearly discerns how much you might do, if you would but retrench all superfluities in your expences; and would truly take to heart this necessary duty of satisfying justice in the first place; and would use all possible industry and labour for that end.

Consider 3dly, that though all injustice in general be hateful in the sight of God, there are some branches of it in particular, which more loudly cry to heaven for vengeance: and more especially such as tend to oppress

the



the poor, by usury, or extortion; or by making a handle of their necessity, to raise to them the price of the things they want; or by defrauding them of their wages, or hire; or otherwise taking, or keeping from them, that which belongs to them. O how heinous are all these sins in the eyes of him, who is *the father of the poor?* They are like murder in his sight. There is a curse entailed upon all such substance, as is gathered together, by oppressing his children. And so there is upon all sacrilegious rapines, by which the church, or temple of God, or his ministers, are defrauded of what is their due; or by which pious foundations, or donations are diverted from the uses of religion, to profane uses. In all such cases God looks upon the wrong as done to himself, and will certainly revenge it, both here and hereafter. All that gold which is brought into the coffers, by robbing, either the poor, or the church, will not only moulder away itself, but will consume all the rest it shall find there, together with the master of it.

Conclude to beware of all manner of injustice; and to keep off at the greatest distance possible from it, as a mortal enemy, both to thy temporal and eternal welfare. Take heed lest the love of that idol mammon should at any time impose upon thee, in this regard: thou art never secure from danger, so long as that idol is not cast out of thy heart. For as the wise man assures us. Eccl. x. 10. *There is not a more wicked thing than to love money: for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.*

OCTOBER. 2. *On our guardian Angels.*

CONSIDER first, that this day is set aside by the church, to glorify God, and to give him thanks, through Jesus Christ his Son, for that inestimable benefit of his divine goodness, by which he has appointed his heavenly spirits, to attend on us, and to guard us during this pilgrimage of our mortality, till they bring us home to himself, and to a happy eternity. Give ear to the word of God on this subject, Ps. xc. *There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.*

dwelling. For he hath given his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. St. Matt. xviii. *Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their Angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.* Hebr. i. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation,* Exodus. xxiii. *Behold I will send my Angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place, that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, &c.* Yes Christians, let us attend to these our heavenly guardians, who are ever inviting us to the love and service of our God, and inspiring us with pious thoughts to this effect; and with their assistance we shall defeat all our enemies, and make our way safely to our eternal country, in spite of all the opposition of hell: according to that of Exod. xxiii. 22. *If thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee: and my Angel shall go before thee, and shall bring thee in, to the promised land, the figure of the heavenly Canaan.*

Consider 2dly, with St. Bernard, (writing on those words, *he hath given his Angels charge over thee*) the wonders of God's bounty and love for us, expressed in this commission given to his Angels. ' For who is it that has given this charge? To whom? of whom? and what is the charge he has given? O let us think well on this grand commission: let us lay it up diligently in our memory. Who has given this charge? Whose Angels are they? Whose will do they obey? *He has given his Angels a charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: nor do they hesitate to bear thee up in thir hands.* It is then the sovereign majesty has given a charge to Angels: yea to his own Angels he has given a charge: to those sublime spirits, so happy, so nearly adhering to himself, and to his own domesticks, he has given a charge of thee. And who art thou? *What is man that thou art mindful* of

of him? or the son of man, that thou makest any account of him? As if man were not rottenness and the son of man a worm. And what is this commission he has given his Angels concerning thee? Even to be thy guardians. O wonderful condescension? O truly great affection of charity!

Consider 3dly, with the same Saint; 'What reverence, what devotion, what confidence, this saying, that God has given his Angels a charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, ought to inspire thee with: a reverence for their presence; a devotion for their benevolence; a confidence for their guardianship. Walk cautiously, as having the Angels always in thy company; who according to their commission, are with thee in all thy ways. In every place, in every corner, have respect to thy Angel. Never dare to do that in his presence, which thou wouldest not dare to do before me. In God, then my brethren, let us affectionately love his Angels, that are to be one day joint heirs with us, but in the mean time are appointed by our Father, and set over us, as tutors and governors. What have we to fear under such guardians as these? They can neither be overcome, nor deceived, who keep us in all our ways; much less can they deceive us. They are faithful, they are wise, they are powerful; what are we afraid of? Let us only follow them, let us keep close to them, and we shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven.'

Conclude to follow in practice these prescriptions of this great Saint: and, as he adds in the same discourse, when at any time we perceive a temptation arising, or we are threatened with any grievous tribulation, let us call upon these our heavenly keepers, our guides, our helpers in due time, in distress; and we shall experience a powerful assistance from them, superior to all the power of earth and hell.

Oct. 3. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

CONSIDER first, that by this commandment, is not only forbidden all false testimony given in open court, or before a magistrate, against any one; (which is usually accompanied with another greater crime, viz. that of perjury, or false swearing; if not with that of robbery, or murder also, when the false witness is the occasion of the loss of any one's goods or life) but also all manner of private slanders, and lies; and all other ways of injuring one's neighbour by words; either in his character and good name, by backbiting and detraction; or in his honour, by reproaches and affronts; or by taking away the peace of his mind, by scoffs and derision; or by robbing him of his friends, by whispering and tale-bearing; or by promoting misunderstanding, and quarrels between him and his neighbours: an evil so odious in the sight of God, that the wise man assures us, Prov, vi. 16, that *his soul abhors it*. All these crimes are condemned by this commandment; and by the eternal and natural law, written in the heart of man: all of them are directly opposite both to charity, and to justice, and to that great rule of life, *not to do by others, what we would not have them to do by us*. All of them bring with them a strict obligation, even under pain of damnation (if the injury have been considerable) of making restitution or satisfaction: and yet how seldom is this put in practice? Ah how common are these injustices of the tongue; and how dreadful are the consequences of them both in time and eternity!

Consider 2dly, more in particular the heinousness of the sin of detraction, which is so common in the world; and which makes up so great a part of the conversation of worldlings. And yet at every blow, says St. Francis de Sales, it gives three mortal wounds; first to the soul of the detractor; then to the reputation of the person detracted; and thirdly, to the consciences of the hearers by drawing as many of them into sin, as are delighted with

with hearing the detraction; and much more if they encourage it, and contribute to propagate it, by publishing it to others. The detractor himself is like a thief or a robber, who takes away his neighbour's character, or good name: yea, he is so much worse than a thief or a robber, as a person's character or good name is more valuable to him, than his worldly substance; which also he is in danger to lose, when he loses his character. Now as in matters of theft or robbery, it is commonly said, *the receiver is as bad as the thief*: so in matters of detraction, he that willingly hears the detractor, whilst he is robbing his neighbour of his reputation, is like the *receiver*, and partakes in the guilt of the robbery. And are Christians aware of this? Do they examine their conscience upon this head? And yet their souls are here at stake. O how few detractors, or tale-bearers would there be, if men were once made sensible, that their unjust and uncharitable discourses were disagreeable to their hearers!

Consider 3dly, that the sin of detraction may be committed, and consequently the obligation of repairing ones neighbours good name, may be incurred, not only by publishing downright flanders, and lies, against his reputation; but also by charging him upon hearsay, or upon ones own suspicions, or rash judgments, with things, if not false, at least doubtful and uncertain; or by magnifying his guilt, and imputing to malice, what might be no more than frailty, or suprise; or by censuring his intentions, in his good works; or even by publishing, without necessity, his real crimes, or defects, in such circumstances, when his character is thereby grievously hurt. Because in all these cases, one does not only sin against *charity*, which obliges us to love our neighbours as ourselves; but also against *justice*, by violating the right our neighbour has, that his good name should be preserved, as long as he has not forfeited it, by any public crime. O Christians do but guide yourselves by that golden rule of *doing as you would be done by*; and you will avyoid all these sins, which send so many souls to hell.

Concluđe

Conclude to examine yourselves well upon the subject of the sins against this commandment; that you may not be imposed upon, by the too common practice of them that live and die, with little or no remorse, under the guilt of the daily breach of this divine law. O remember that custom and example will be no excuse for you, if you walk along with the crowd, in the broad road, that leads to destruction.

OCT. 4. *On rash judgment.*

CONSIDER first, that this commandment is also violated by the sin of *rash judgment*, which robs one's neighbour of his esteem and reputation; if not with regard to others, by publishing to them, the suspicions we have conceived, or the judgment we make to his disadvantage; at least within our own breast, by despising and condemning him *there*. O how much is this crime (when fully voluntary, and deliberate) condemned by the word of God! O how contrary it is to all Christian charity! *Judge not*, saith our Lord, Luke vii. 37. *and you shall not be judged: condemn not; and you shall not be condemned.* *Why dost thou judge thy brother?* saith St. Paul, Rom. xiv. 10. *or why dost thou despise thy brother?* *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; and every one of us shall render account to God for himself.* *Let us not therefore judge one another any more.* And again, 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. *He that judgeth is the Lord: Therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.* And again Rom. xiv, *who art thou that judgest the servant of another?* *It is to his own master he must stand or fall.* *He that detracleth his brother, saith St. James, Chap. iv. 11. &c. or he that judgeth his brother, detracleth the law, and judgeth the law.* *There is one lawgiver and judge, that is able to destroy, and deliver: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?* O let us always attend to these divine admonitions, and fly *rash judgment* like death!

Consider

Consider 2dly, the injury, done by *rash judgment*, first to God himself, to whom all *judgment* belongs; by usurping his authority, in judging and condemning others, without his licence; and even presuming to claim his prerogative, of diving into the intentions and secrets of hearts. Then the wrong that is done to one's neighbour, by passing sentence upon him unheard, and without sufficient knowledge of his guilt; (which way of proceeding would be highly unjust in any judge, or court whatsoever) and this without any sufficient authority over him, or observing any order of justice in his regard. Moreover *rash judgment*, when fully voluntary, is also highly criminal, upon account of its opposition to those most essential virtues of a Christian, *charity* and *humility*. For the rashly censuring and condemning one's neighbour must needs destroy *charity*: since the property of *charity* is *to think no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And how can it be otherwise, for *charity* is *love*: and *love*, so far from rashly imputing imaginary crimes to the beloved, is ever willing to overlook even real defects, when duty does not oblige to correct them. And as to *humility*, nothing can be more opposite to it, than the despising and undervaluing one's neighbour, and secretly preferring one's self before him, in one's own breast: now this is commonly one of the chief ingredients in *rash judgment*.

Consider 3dly, that in order to overcome the vicious habit of judging rashly of our neighbour, we must search out the root of this evil, and then lay the axe to the root, in order to cut it up. *Rash judgments*, in many persons spring from pride, and from their having too good an opinion of themselves; which makes them ever ready to believe the worst of others, and to censure them, in order to exalt themselves. In others the root of their *rash judgments* is the ill-will, hatred, or envy, they bear to their neighbours, which inclines them to put always the worst construction on what they say or do, and to condemn their intentions, even in their best actions. Others, again, because they are evil themselves, judge ill of their neighbours by themselves.

Others

Others in fine from the presumption they have of their own wit, great talents, and experience, arrogate to themselves a privilege of passing their judgment upon every one, and yet proudly imagine they are out of the danger of rashness, or injustice, in so doing: such is the confidence they have in their own clear-sightedness: though alas! it often pretends to discover the mote in another's eye, and sees not the beam in its own. The general remedy for all rash judgments, from whatsoever source they proceed, is to have our eye always upon ourselves, and upon our own faults; and to turn it away from our neighbours. To endeavour also to be sensible, how great an evil it is to judge, and condemn our neighbours; and how pernicious it is to our own souls: to make frequent acts of detestation of it; and to pray continually to our Lord to be delivered from it.

Conclude to guard against all manner of rash judgments, as being hateful to God, injurious to your neighbours, and destructive of the salvation of your own souls. The study and practice of *charity* and *humility* is the sovereign means to get the victory over this pernicious evil.

OCT. 5. *On avoiding all manner of lies.*

CONSIDER first, in what manner the vice of lying is every where condemned in the word of God. Our Saviour tells us, *John viii. 44.* that the devil is a liar and the father of lies: and *Apocalypse xxi. 6.* that *all liars shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* And the Holy Ghost assures us by the mouth of the wise man, *Prov. vi. 16, 17.* that *the Lord hateth a lying tongue*, and *Ch. xiv. 22.* that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*: and *Chap. xiii. 5.* that *the just shall hate a lying word*, and *Wisd. i. 11.* that *the mouth that lyeth killeth the soul*, and *Eccl. xx. 17.* that even *a thief is better than a man that is always lying*: but that both of them shall inherit destruction, and *v. 26.* that *a lie is a foul blot in a man*, and *v. 26.* that *the manners of lying men are without honour*, and that *their confusion is with them*.

them without ceasing: besides many other texts against lies and liars. O let us fly and detest this evil, which is thus frequently condemned by the Spirit of God, as hateful to him, and pernicious to our souls!

Consider 2dly, that the reason why *lies* are so hateful to God, is because God is essentially *Truth*; and therefore as all *lies* are opposite to *Truth*, they are all opposite to God, and cannot but offend him. Every known untruth, by reason of this opposition to the God of *Truth*, is essentially evil; and ought not to be committed for any consideration whatsoever. God himself cannot dispense with any one, or give him a licence to tell a *lie*; no more than he himself can *lie*. Some *lies* indeed are more heinous than others; either because they more directly strike at revealed truths, or tend to degrade God and religion; or because of the injury they do to our neighbours, either in soul or body, goods or good name: and these are all mortal sins: but there is no *lie* whatsoever, not even such as are told in jest, or such as are *officious*, or for excuse, but what are essentially sinful; and therefore ought not to be committed, not even for saving the whole world; because *evil is not to be committed that good may come of it*. Besides what good can be expected, from turning one's back upon *Truth*, and sheltering one's self in a *lie*? O! let us rather die than thus offend the God of *Truth*.

Consider 3dly, that it is a dangerous thing for any Christian to make slight of telling a *lie*, though it were only a *lie* of vanity, or for an excuse; and without any design to prejudice his neighbour. But it is still more dangerous to indulge one's self in a habit or custom of telling this kind of *lies*. For it is no small evil wilfully to dishonour the sovereign *Truth* at any time; and to lead one's neighbour into error, by obtruding falsehood upon him for truth: but it is a very great evil to make nothing of entertaining a habit of wilfully offending God, by such *lies*; and this upon a notion that if one can but escape hell, it matters not how much one otherwise offends him. For how can such a habit as this be consistent with loving God above all things? Or how can

can there be any security, for a soul that treats her God in this slighting manner? Oh no! let us not deceive ourselves: God is not to be mocked. Those that make slight of a habit of lies, can never be friends of the God of Truth; nor reasonably expect to be eternally with him.

Conclude never to tell a known lie upon any account whatsoever, much less, for avoiding a little anger, or any other slight occasion. Nothing can justify a lie, not even the saving one's life by it, because it is an offence to God; who ought not to be offended, even to save the whole world.

OCT. 6. *Thou shalt not covet, &c.*

CONSIDER first, that after forbidding the sins, and injuries, committed by words or actions; God forbids also in these two last commandments, the sins of thoughts and desires; particularly with relation to *avarice*, and *lust*: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods*. These two kinds of irregular desires and inclinations, suggested by the lust of the flesh, and by the love of the mammon of this world, are like a raging pestilence, which has infected the greatest part of mankind from the beginning: like another deluge, they even overflow the earth. Money and carnal pleasures are the two great idols set up by Satan, to confront the living God: to these men sacrifice their hearts and affections; the young by the *concupiscence of the flesh*, the old by the *concupiscence of the eyes*; and thus both old and young are for the most part debauched from the love and service of God, and made slaves to sin, and victims to hell. Ah! Christians never think yourselves innocent, though you keep your hands from stealing, and your bodies from fornication or adultery, if you do not at the same time keep your eyes, and your hearts from coveting. Such you are in the sight of God, as your affections and desires are: if these are criminal, you cannot be innocent.

Consider

Consider 2dly, that by this precept, *thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*, we are commanded to set a guard upon our thoughts, upon our hearts, upon our eyes, and upon all our other senses, that the fire of concupiscence may not make its way through any of those avenues into our souls, to burn them here with lust, and with the dark flames of hell hereafter. Ah! what have we not to apprehend, from the depraved inclinations of our corrupt nature, if we do not turn away both our senses, and our imaginations, from all alluring objects, and shut these gates against the first suggestions of evil? How much more are all Christians bound to fly all such occasions, as expose them to a more evident and immediate danger, of lewd thoughts and desires; as a great part of modern comedies, balls, masquerades, &c. are known to do, more especially with relation to the younger sort. And yet alas! how few are there that are not too fond of these dangerous diversions, which are so near a kin to the pomps of Satan, which we renounced at our Baptism!

Consider 3dly, the necessity of restraining also the corrupt inclinations of that other branch of concupiscence, which relates to our neighbour's goods. In order to this, we must in the first place renounce, and detest all *unjust* desires; and such as any ways tend to withhold from our neighbour, or deprive him of what, in justice, belongs to him; as also all wishes of his death, that we may come at his possessions; all desires of publick or private calamities, for one's own particular advantage; &c. But then we must not stop here: we must lay the axe to the root of all these evils, which is the love of this mammon of iniquity; this unhappy vice of *covetousness*, which if it be not cut up, and cast out of the heart, will not suffer either justice or grace long to reside there, according to that of the Apostle, 1 Timoth. vi. 9, 10. *They that want to become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires,* which

which drown men in destruction and perdition: for covetousness is the root of all evils.

Conclude to fight till death against both these branches of concupiscence; as capital enemies of the soul; which if not guarded against, and overcome, are capable of doing us infinitely more harm, than all the devils in hell.

OCT. 7. *On the precepts of the church.*

CONSIDER first, that all Christians are under a strict obligation of keeping also the *precepts*, that is, the *commandments* of the church; because the law of God commands us so to do. *Honour thy father and thy mother*; is a commandment, which not only obliges us to obey them that are our parents according to the flesh, but also our *spiritual* parents, at least in matters *spiritual*; *viz.* the pastors of the church of Christ. To these Christ our Lord has said, *Luke x. 16. he that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* To these he has given *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, with the power of *binding and loosing*, *St. Matt. xvi. 19. xviii. 18.* These *he hath sent as his Father sent him*, *St. John xx. 21.* With these he has promised to abide till the end of the world, *St. Matt. xxviii. 20.* These he has made his *ministers*, the stewards and dispensers of his mysteries and sacraments, *1 Cor. iv. 1.* and his *ambassadors*, *2 Cor. v. 20.* These he has given us for *pastors and teachers*, *Eph. iv. 11, 12. &c.* To these he has given the charge of our souls: and therefore the Apostle calls upon us, *Heb. xiii. not only to follow their faith, v. 7. but also to obey them, and to submit ourselves to them, v. 17.* O blessed obedience! It is in vain to pretend to obey our Father in heaven, if we refuse to obey our mother the church.

Consider 2dly, the excellency of these precepts of the church, and their admirable tendency to bring us to God; by obliging us to set aside so many of our days for prayer and other religious duties; to humble ourselves so often, and to do penance for our sins, by fasting and abstinence; to frequent the sacraments and sacrifice

sacrifice of the church, &c. O these precepts are not mere human inventions, or injunctions: they have been dictated by the Spirit of God, which always resides, and presides in the church; they are enacted by divine commission, and authority: they are generally speaking so many determinations of the divine law. The law of God and of nature requires, that we should dedicate a considerable part of our time to the divine worship: the precepts of the church point out the particular days we are to set aside for this end. The divine law calls upon us, to pay to our God, the homage of adoration, praise, and sacrifice: the precepts of the church prescribe for this end the frequenting the great sacrifice of the death of Christ, offered up to God in the holy mysteries. The law of God obliges us to do penance for our sins; to restrain our passions and lusts; to offer up pure and humble prayer to God: and consequently to fast and abstain, as far as shall be necessary for us to answer these ends: the church by her precepts orders the times for this penitential exercise; lest if we were left to ourselves, we should wholly neglect it. The law of Christ ordains the confession of our sins, and the worthily receiving the sacred communion: the precepts of the church require, under pain of excommunication, that this divine law should be complied with in such manner, as not to defer the confession of our sins beyond the year, nor to neglect the receiving the holy communion, at least at Easter. See then, my soul, how necessary it is for thee to observe all these precepts of the church, in order to comply with the law and commandments of God.

Consider 3dly, the unhappy case of all such Christians, as despise these precepts of the church of Christ: Alas! they despise in effect both Christ, and his Father, Luke x. 16. and will be treated accordingly at his tribunal. The wilful transgression of any one of these ordinances of God's church is certainly criminal in the sight of God: how much more the contempt of them? And what then must we think of the wretched state of so many souls, that make a practice of transgressing these

laws of the church, by breaking through the rules prescribed by her decrees and constitutions, with regard to festivals, fasts and abstinences; or with regard to the frequentation of the sacraments, at the times appointed? Ah! such undutiful children as these, who live in an habitual disobedience to God and his church, deserve not the name of children, or of catholick Christians; and without a sincere conversion from these their evil ways, must expect undoubtedly to be reckoned another day amongst *heathens* and unbelievers.

Conclude to observe religiously the laws and ordinances of the church of God; and to see they be religiously observed by all under your care. If there be a necessity at any time of your being dispensed with in any of these church laws, go to your pastors for this dispensation; but presume not to dispense with yourselves. Only the pastors of the church, can dispense in the precepts of the church.

OCT. 8. *On the vice of pride.*

CONSIDER first, that pride is an inordinate love, conceit, or desire, of self-excellence; or a delight and complacency in one's own self, by occasion of some real or imaginary excellency, which we have, or pretend to have, either in virtue, or grace, or knowledge, or in any other goods, or qualities, whether external or internal, considered merely, as the means to make us excel, and as such puffing us up with self-esteem, and causing us to prefer ourselves before others, and to despise others. This pride is the mother of all vices, but more especially of ambition, presumption, and vain-glory; from which it differs only in this, that ambition aims at *excelling* in the way of honour and dignity, and in being set above others; presumption seeks to *excel*, in the way of great achievements, attempted upon confidence of one's own strength; vain glory pretends to *excellence* in the way of glory, that is, in the way of being known, praised, and esteemed by others: but pride looks chiefly at herself, and sets up her own proper *self-excellence* for her idol; which she worships, loves, esteems,

esteems, and desires above all things, and to which she sacrifices all things else. O deliver us, dear Lord, from this enormous evil, the first-born of Satan, and the original parent both of death and hell.

Consider 2dly, that St. Gregory (L. 23. Mor. c. 4.) distinguishes in pride, four different kinds; or four ways, of being guilty of this worst of vices. First, by attributing to one's self, and not to God, the good things we have from him, either of nature, or of grace. 2dly, By ascribing at least to one's own merits, what we have received from God, and not giving him the whole glory. 3dly, By conceiting ourselves to have graces, talents, or perfections, which indeed we have not, and being puffed up in ourselves with this *imaginary excellence*. 4thly, By highly esteeming, and valuing ourselves, for the graces, or good qualities we *really have*; and applauding ourselves in such manner in them, as to affect to have them to ourselves alone, and to despise others, or envy them the like accomplishments. All these, in their nature, are mortal sins, when fully consented to; and are of the worst kind of mortal sins: because of all the seven capital vices, pride is acknowledged by divines to be the worst, by reason of its extreme opposition to God, in setting itself up, as it were in his place, and Satan-like, lifting up its head against him; and affecting a *self-excellence*, which belongs to God alone. Hence as we learn from the Apostle, Rom. i. the proud have often been delivered up, and abandoned by God to a reprobate sense, and suffered to fall even into the most shameful and unnatural lusts, in punishment of their self-conceit. O how enormous then must the vice of pride be in the eyes of God, when the falling into such abominations as these is the punishment of it!

Consider 3dly, that pride is a mortal sin, not only when a man directly incurs the guilt, of any of those four kinds or ways, mentioned by St. Gregory, by his own deliberate judgment, and will; (at least as often as the matter is of moment); but also when he incurs the guilt of any of them indirectly, or equivalently: by

taking such complacency in himself, or carrying himself in such manner to others, as if he judged himself to have, or desired that others should judge him to have, any excellency, or perfection of himself, and not from God. As also when our affection, or inclination to our own excellence, or the conceit we have of it, is joined with a great irreverence, or injury to God, or a considerable contempt of our neighbour, or detriment to him: or again when through the love, or conceit we have of our own excellence, we withdraw ourselves from the subjection we owe to God, and his holy law, or to the authority of superiors established by him. Ah! how common are all these sins! How many ways are poor unhappy mortals daily guilty of this highest of treasons against the Divine Majesty! And how dreadful are the consequences of this guilt, both in time and eternity!

Conclude to examine well thy conscience upon this head of pride: for it is a subtle evil, which often imposes upon poor mortals; insomuch that they who are the most guilty of it, oftentimes will not believe themselves to be proud. O take care not to be deceived by this *noon-day devil!* watch and pray continually against it: spare no pains to cast it out of thy soul. If thou thinkest it has no share in thee, thou deceivest thyself: there cannot be a more evident proof of thy being proud, than to imagine thyself to be out of the reach of this vice.

OCT. 9. *On the malignity of pride.*

CONSIDER first, the malignity of pride, in as much as it corrupts the very vitals of the soul, and leaves nothing sound in it. It is a rotteness at the heart, that spoils the fairest plants, that grow on this infected soil. The fruits of the good works of the proud, are like those that are said to grow on the banks of the lake of Sodom, fair to the eye, but rotten within. Their virtues are blasted, and have nothing but an outward appearance; because the root of them is corrupted. God is not with them, truth is not with them, grace

grace is not with them: they have no foundation within them, for any solid good; because they want humility: for *God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.*

Consider 2dly, the malignity of pride from another head, *viz.* from its filling the soul with all other evils. For this dreadful vice, not content with shutting the gate against grace, and against all good, and even changing those that should be the most virtuous actions into crimes; opens wide the door to all manner of sin and iniquity; by setting all the other passions at work, to serve, by all kinds of extravagancies, its unbridled appetite after *self-excellence*. To gratify this predominant passion, *covetousness* is employed, to procure, right or wrong, those riches, that may furnish the means of *excelling*; and *prodigality*, in the expending them. *Anger*, hatred and revenge are let loose, against all that thwart or stand in the way of its lawless pretensions. Inferiors are oppressed; they are treated with *contempt* and *scorn*: equals are *envied*, as rivals in honour; they are *judged*, *condemned*, and *flattered*: superiors are slighted, and *disobeyed*, &c. not to speak of innumerable other mortal evils, quarrels, murders, rebellions, heresies, blasphemies, and what not, which are frequently the productions of pride: besides all the abominations of lust, and all its fatal offspring, to which the proud are so often delivered up, in punishment of their arrogance. Sweet Jesus deliver us from all these evils, by teaching us to be *meek and humble of heart.*

Consider 3dly, that the malignity of pride is chiefly owing to its opposition to the glory of God, and to his divine truth. God is the Being of all beings: all things else without him are nothing: all excellence and all glory is his; we have nothing, excepting sin, but what we have from him; we know nothing but through him, we can do nothing without him. To pretend therefore to any excellence as our own property, or to any glory as due to us, or to appropriate to ourselves the gifts and graces of God, and to be puffed up with them, and to glory in them as our own, is

is a sacrilegious robbery of that which belongs to God alone; it is attempting to seat ourselves in his throne; it is claiming a share in his self-excellence, which is no less essential to him, than his self-existence, independence, and infinity. For as none but God can be of himself, so none but God can *excel* of himself. For this reason, *every proud man is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xvi. 4. because he pretends to rival him in his glory, and like the arch-rebel Lucifer, to dispute his prerogative, of being alone *self-excellent*. His pride is a lye, and of the very worst sort of lies, even that which was first framed by the father of lies, in pretending to be like to the most High, and therefore it is most hateful to the eternal truth.

Conclude to detest and abhor, and to fly with all thy power from this abominable vice, which is so hateful to God, and so pernicious to all that suffer their souls to be corrupted with it. Give ear to the scripture, Tob. iv. 14. *Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, nor in thy words for from it all perdition took its beginning.*

Oct. 10. *Remedies against pride.*

CONSIDER first, that in order to overcome thy pride, thou must not only be thoroughly sensible of the malignity of this evil in itself, and of the dreadful consequences of its being suffered to reign in the soul: but must also be convinced, that thou thyself art continually in danger from it; that it is an evil deeply rooted in thy own corrupt nature; an obstinate and subtle enemy, that will never cease to wage war against thee all thy life long; and that is so much the more dangerous to thee, by how much the less he is apprehended by thee. So that the first, and most necessary prescription against pride, is to study well, that we may know our corruption in this kind, by the help of a frequent review of our own interiour, and of the secret springs, that rule and set all our passions to work: that so having rightly discovered the monster, that affects to hide himself in the inmost recesses of the soul, we may declare an eternal war against it, by perpetual watching

watching, praying, and fighting, and by frequently repeated acts, both exterior and interior, of the virtue of humility.

Consider 2dly, that the true knowledge of God, and of ourselves, acquired by the daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer, is the sovereign remedy against all manner of pride. For all our pretensions to *excellence*, all our groundless imaginations, by which we take ourselves for *something*, all these fumes of self-conceit, which are so apt to fly up, and to turn our heads, upon occasion of any advantages, real or imaginary, which we ascribe to ourselves, are all put to flight, when the light of the knowledge of God comes in and takes place in the soul, and shews her that all that is not God, is a mere nothing. All human greatness, power, all height, and depth, and every thing that is created, dwindles away and quite vanishes, when God appears: *heaven and earth flee away from before his face, and no place is found for them*, Apocal. xx. 11. how much less can poor man glory in his sight? O how can *earth and ashes be proud*, in the presence of the immense, eternal, infinite Deity?

Consider 3dly, that the light of God, which by a diligence in the exercise of mental prayer flows more and more into the soul, not only serves to humble us in his sight, and to quell our pride, by the sense it gives us of his infinite greatness and majesty; before whom we are but wretched worms, and less than nothing: but also helps us to that true knowledge of ourselves, which obliges us to vilify, and despise ourselves. For here we are made sensible, what poor creatures indeed we are; how mean is our extraction; as to the body, from dirt and corruption, as to the soul from nothing: how early we were infected with sin; how full we are now of all kind of miseries, both corporal and spiritual: what a perpetual repugnance we have to good, and what a violent propensity to evil, from our very childhood: how much we are encompassed with darkness, ignorance, and errors; exposed daily to innumerable dangers; capable of all that is wicked, and incapable of ourselves of any good:

good: certain of death (though we know not when, where, nor how) which will make over these our bodies to worms and corruption, and transmit these souls to judgment; and dreadfully uncertain as to the issue of that great trial, and our eternal lot. And shall not all this suffice to cure our pride?

Conclude to spare no pains to acquire these two most necessary branches of Christian science, *viz.* the true knowledge of God, and the true knowledge of yourselves: they are the foundation of true humility, and of all good; and are to be learnt by meditation and prayer.

OCT. 11. *Other prescriptions against pride.*

CONSIDER first, that in order to overcome your pride, it will also be of good service, frequently to reflect, how vain and empty, fading and perishable, those things generally are, which men are apt to be proud of; such as worldly honours, riches, beauty, fine cloaths, &c. which give no real intrinsick value, or worth to the possessors; nor serve to make them one whit the better in the sight of God: but on the contrary, if they are proud of them, make them by much the worse; yea odious and contemptible, both to God and man. For every one hates and despises pride in another, how much soever he cherishes it in himself: and such as proudly seek to *exalt themselves*, are generally *humbled*, both by God and man. And as to the gifts of grace, or other talents, received from God, it is still more criminal to be proud of them, because the more valuable they are in themselves, the greater is the sacrilege in robbing God of the glory of them, by taking pride in them, as if they were our own, and not his. O! it is humility alone, that is both the guardian, and the best ornament of all other virtues: they quickly degenerate, and turn into vices, when we begin to be proud of them.

Consider 2dly, that we may also extract an excellent antidote against the poison of pride, from the very consideration of the deformity of our pride. For nothing sure can be more humbling to the soul, than to be made

made rightly sensible of the extravagant folly and madness, as well as the sacrilegious impiety, and diabolical presumption she stands guilty of, by lifting up her head against her God by arrogance and self-conceit. The consequence of which is that she is given up by him, to be possessed at present by the worst of devils: and becomes herself a very devil in his eyes; black, ugly, and odious, like the devil, and condemned to be a victim of hell with him. And can a soul that seriously considers all this, suffer herself to be any longer possessed by pride? Can such an odious monster, when brought out of its dark lurking hole, and set before the eyes of the soul, with all the train of woes, that attend and follow it, find any more any room in her? O it is true, with regard to mortal sin in general, and to pride in particular, that the deformity and malignity of the guilt of it in the soul, and the eternal punishment of it hereafter, are most humbling considerations. For surely a soul, that is turned away from God by mortal sin; and a soul, that is eternally banished from him, and given up to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that is never extinguished, in the dungeons of hell; can neither of them have any thing to be proud of! Mortal sin, and hell, those two most dreadful of all evils, leave no room for pride.

Consider 3dly, who it is, that is *the king over all the children of pride?* Whose standard do they all join, in opposition to the God, that made heaven and earth? Alas! they all join with Satan, their mortal enemy: they follow him against their God, their Maker, their Redeemer, and their sovereign Good. And what expectations can they have, from following him for their king, who is already himself condemned to hell! Ah! no other than endless confusion, perpetual discontent and uneasiness here, and everlasting damnation hereafter. Oh! it was this joining with the king of pride, that has entailed all kind of miseries upon the sons of Adam. To remedy these, the Son of God came down from heaven, by the mystery of his incarnation; and humbled himself even to the death of the cross; to oppose

oppose the standard of his humility to the standard of the devil. He calls all men to join his royal standard, by *learning of him to be meek and humble of heart*: promising to rescue them that follow him, from the tyranny and slavery of the wicked one; to give peace and rest to their souls here, and eternal joys hereafter. And shall we balance for one moment, with which of the two we shall join, the king of pride, or the king of humility; the tyrant of hell, or the God of heaven? See here, my soul, most urgent motives to renounce thy pride, and to embrace humility. The one is suggested by Satan, who is damned for it; the other is taught by word and example, by the Son of God, who, by it, has opened heaven for us: the one is the road to hell, the other to heaven.

Conclude to renounce the king of pride, with all his pomps, and to shake off his heavy yoke, which never suffers the soul to rest; and, instead of it, to take up the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ, by meekness and humility; and thou wilt find refreshment here, and heaven hereafter.

OCT. 12. *On vain glory.*

CONSIDER first, that the vice of *vain glory* is nearly allied to that of pride, and has for its object an imaginary *excellence*, in the way of *glory*; that is, in the way of being known, and talked of, praised, and esteemed by others. See here, my soul, a dangerous vice: not only with regard to the children of the world, whose thoughts, words, and actions, are generally influenced by the love of praise, honour, and esteem; or by the fear of what the world will say, or think of them: but even with regard to the children of God, who are daily and hourly exposed to its temptations, in the very best of their actions; with the danger of their losing all the fruit of them, and of their being quite vitiated and corrupted by this plague. This was the vice of the Scribes and Pharisees, who did all their works that they might be honoured and esteemed by men; and therefore their alms, their fasting, their prayers, and

and other good works, availed them nothing in the light of God; because vain-glory corrupted them all; and at the very time that they were esteemed as saints by the world, made them like devils in the eyes of God. Christians beware of this pernicious evil: watch and pray continually against it.

Consider 2dly, that *vain glory*, which is always dangerous, amounts to the guilt of a mortal sin, whenever the affection of the heart is so far set upon human applause, praise, or esteem, as to love it as much, or more than God: or, as St. Thomas of Aquin expresses it, when a person directs his intention in such manner to the glory of man, as to make it his last end, to which he refers even the works of virtue; and for the sake of which, he does not hesitate to offend his God. In like manner, it is a mortal sin, when a person seeks vain glory, by committing mortal sin; for example, by swearing, quarrelling, taking revenge, &c. to shew his courage, or to gain the esteem of being a man of honour; or for fear of being blamed, or despised by the world. As also when any person, for the sake of maintaining his esteem, or for fear of being thought less skilful, or less knowing, refuses to seek, or admit of the assistance, or counsel of others; and thus exposes himself to the danger of occasioning some considerable detriment, corporal or spiritual, to himself, or to others. In fine, vain glory is a mortal sin, whenever a man glories in the gifts and graces of God, as if they were his own; and as if he had not received them from God. See, my soul, how many ways this love of worldly honour, glory and praise, which modern worldlings, like the antient pagans, take for a virtue, is condemned by sound Christian morality as a capital vice, which sends innumerable souls to hell.

Consider 3dly, the malignity of this vice of *vain glory*, from its being the fruitful parent of a numerous offspring of other pernicious evils, oftentimes worse than itself. St. Gregory reckons up seven daughters of this unhappy mother. 1. *Disobedience*, by which a man despises the ordinances of lawful superiors, for the

love of his own worldly honour, or esteem. 2. *Boasting*, that is, vaunting, or glorying of himself, of his own talents, or performances, and ever loving to be talking of himself; a vice as odious and ridiculous, as it is common in the conversation of the proud and vain-glorious. 3. *Hypocrisy*, or making a shew of godliness, or sanctity, to gain the esteem of men. 4. *Contention*, or strife, that is, wrangling, brawling, and quarrelling in words; to maintain his own opinion, right or wrong, or to defend what he has said or done. 5. *Obstinacy*, in adhering to error, rather than to acknowledge himself to have been deceived; or to seem to yield, or to be overcome. 6. *Discord*, or disagreement of wills and hearts, by occasion of different pretensions, and contests for honour and esteem. 7. *Invention of novelties*, in the way of new opinions, new fashions, or other innovations brought in to make himself a name, or to procure esteem, or applause. See Christians what a train of evils are daily produced by vain-glory. And what are all heresies and schisms but a compound of these same evils, and consequently the productions also of vain glory?

Conclude to keep a strict guard against this dangerous enemy of the soul; or it will rob thee of all good, and fill thee with all evil. Daily pray with the royal prophet, *Turn away my eyes, O Lord, that they look not upon vanity*: and as often as in thy words, or actions, thou findest thyself attacked with the suggestions of this vice; say with the same prophet, *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory*.

OCT. 13. *Prescriptions against vain glory.*

CONSIDER first, in order to cure this unhappy itch of vain glory, which is so deeply rooted in our corrupt nature, how little title we have to pretend to any honour, praise, or esteem, from any one; we who have so often, and so grievously, offended the Creator of all; and who, if we were to be treated according to our deserts, ought rather to be despised, and trampled under foot, by all men, yea to be detested and abhorred by

abhorred by all God's creatures. For there is something so black, so odious, so filthy and abominable, in wilful sin, that even toads and snakes, were they capable of knowing it, would hate and fly from the unhappy wretches, that are stained with it. What pretensions then can such wretched sinners as we have to any honour, praise, or esteem, whilst we are conscious to ourselves of mortal sin? No other sure than the damned in hell. And can there be any room for vain glory there?

Consider 2dly, how truly vain, how empty, how short, how inconstant is all human glory, and all the praise and esteem of men: it is like a puff of wind, which passes in a moment, and makes us not one jot the better in ourselves: it adds nothing to us in the sight of God, the just and true, and eternal Judge of all merit. O give ear to the devout A. Kempis, L. iii. C. 50. 'The sentiments of men are often wrong in their judgments.—What is a man the better, for being reputed greater by man? One deceitful man deceives another; one vain man deceives another; the blind deceives the blind; the weak the weak, whilst he extols him; and in truth doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praises him: for how much each one is in thy eyes, O Lord, so much he is, and no more, saith the humble St. Francis.' And again, Chap. 14. 'What is all flesh in thy sight, O Lord?—How can he be puffed up with the vain talk of men, whose heart is truly subjected to God?—He will never suffer himself to be moved with the tongues of them that praise him who hath established his whole confidence in God. For behold all they that talk of him are all nothing; for they shall pass away with the sound of their words: but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever, Ps. cxvi.'

Consider 3dly, that this passion for glory, honour, praise, and esteem, is not only highly unreasonable, foolish and vain; it is unjust too, it is impious, it is pernicious. It is unjust and impious; because it tends to rob God of his glory, and to usurp what belongs to him alone; inasmuch as it pretends to appropriate to

itself the glory of God's gifts, which he has reserved for himself. *What hast thou, saith the Apostle, that thou hast not received; and if thou hast received, why doſt thou glory, as if thou hadſt not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7. It is also pernicious, inasmuch as it robs man of the reward of his good works, and even poisons the best of his actions, and exposes the actor to the danger, of being eternally punished for those very works, for which he expected an eternal crown. *O take heed, saith our Lord, that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your father who is in heaven,* Matt. vi. 1. No: no other reward, but that of the Scribes and Pharisees, against whom he pronounces his woes, because *they did all their works to be seen by men, and loved the uppermost seats, and salutations and titles,* Matt. xxiii. *and justified themselves before men:* but, said he, *God knoweth your hearts; for that which is high to men is an abomination before God,* Luke xvi. 14. Ah! it was this love of *human glory,* that flood chiefly in their way, and hindered them from submitting to the faith and simplicity of the gospel: *For how can you believe, saith our Lord to them, John v. 44. who receive glory one from another: and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek.* So pernicious it is to the soul to be a slave to *vain glory.*

Conclude, O my soul, for thy part, ever to seek the glory of God, by a purity of intention, in all thy words and actions: and God will be *thy reward exceeding great.* If what thou art saying or doing be right in his eyes; it matters not what the world thinks, or says of thee, or of thy performances: but if he disapproves of thy conduct, it will be of no service to thee to be esteemed and applauded by the whole world. For ' He that has ' a mind to be praised by men, whilst he is dispraised ' by God, shall not be justified by men, when he shall ' be judged by God; nor rescued by men, when he ' shall be condemned by God.' St. Augustine Confess. l. x. ch. 36.

OCT. 14. *On the vice of covetousness.*

CONSIDER first, that the vice of covetousness consists in having too great a love, desire, or concern, for money, or other worldly goods and possessions: so as to set one's heart upon them; to be uneasy and solicitous about them; to covet them eagerly, when absent, to take too great a complacency in them, when present, and to make them the darling of one's affections. The malignity of this vice may easily be discovered, from its opposition to God, and to his worship; and to every branch of divine charity: which is so great, that in the language of the Scripture, covetousness is named the *serving of idols*, and the covetous man is declared to be an *idolater*, Eph. v. 5. Colos. iii. 5. because he worships, and loves his money more than God: and what is idolatry, but *worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator?* Rom. i. 25. Yes, the covetous man serves mammon, the *God of this world*, more than the living God of heaven: for the love of mammon he turns his back upon his Maker, neglects his love and service, and is ever ready to break through his heavenly law and commandments, rather than forego his worldly interest; to which he sacrifices his soul and all; and for the sake of which, he hardens his heart against the necessities of his neighbours, and the cries of the poor. O how evidently is here verified, that of the wise man, Eccl. x. 10. *There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.*

Consider 2dly, the malignity of this vice of loving money, from its unhappy offspring, that is, from the innumerable evils which it daily produces. It is the mother of thefts and robberies, of fraud and deceit, of oppression of the poor, of usury and extortion, and of all manner of injustices; it employs innumerable lies and perjuries to support its darling idol. It is the parent of bribery and corruption, and of all the sad consequences this evil produces in the world. It even creeps into the sanctuary, and too often profanes it with

manifold abuses, and sacrileges. It has often brought forth heresies and schisms too. 1 *Timoth.* vi. 10. and with them a deluge of other crimes: it has pillaged and destroyed churches, hospitals, and monasteries, and invaded and carried off the patrimony of the poor, &c. It has even betrayed and sold the Son of God himself. O cursed love of money! How long shalt thou thus, like a second deluge, drown the whole world! When shall thy tyranny have an end? Wilt thou never cease to fill the world with all sort of crimes, and hell with souls?

Consider 3dly, that this vice of *covetousness*, besides all this brood of evils, which it daily brings forth, produces many other sad effects in the soul of man, even then when it does not hurry him into those more scandalous excesses specified above: and, when in the eyes of the world, it appears more innocent. For where a person, though he covets not perhaps the goods of his neighbour, yet sets his affection too much upon riches, or worldly possessions, and eagerly pursues after money, he quickly loses all relish for heavenly things, and all true sense of devotion; his heart is filled with the love of the world, and with many cares and anxious solicitudes about the things of the world; which, like thorns, choak up the seed of the word, and of the grace of God; and hinder it from bringing forth the fruits of faith, hope, and charity, in their due time. The love of riches overpowers his love of God, and of his neighbour; the care of his eternal salvation is no longer his principal concern: he loses that confidence he ought to have in divine providence: he neglects religious duties: he does not give alms according to his circumstances: in a word, he is continually in danger of breaking through the law of God, by commission, or omission, for the love of money: so dreadful are the consequences of covetousness, even then when it pretends to keep itself within the bounds of justice.

Conclude to beware of this vice of *covetousness*, as of one of the worst of the enemies of thy soul: so much the more dangerous to thee, as it is too apt to impose

impose upon persons, with specious pretexts of worldly prudence, and of necessity: insomuch that oftentimes they that are the most covetous, and whose heart is quite set upon this worldly mammon, are scarce sensible of their disease, however grievous and mortal. O take care, my soul, not to deceive thyself, nor to suffer thyself to be deceived. Examine well the bent of thy thoughts, and of the affections of thy heart; and thou wilt easily discover where thy treasure is.

Oct. 15. *Prescriptions against covetousness, out of holy writ.*

CONSIDER first, in what manner the word of God, in innumerable places, declares itself against this vice of covetousness. The wise man tells us, *Prov. i. 19.* that *the ways of every covetous man destroy the soul of the possessors.* And *Ecclesiasticus x. 9.* that *nothing is more wicked than the covetous man.* *Isaias, Chap. v. 9.* pronounces a *woe* against the covetous: and *chap. xxxiii. 15.* promises eternal blessings to them that *cast away covetousness.* *Jeremiah* threatens the *Jews* with the worst of evils, *chap. vi. and viii.* *because from the least to the greatest they all were given to covetousness.* *Amos also, ix. 1.* and *Heb. ii. 6, 9.* denounce the like judgments and woes from God against the covetous. Our Lord himself *Mark vii. 22.* reckons covetousness amongst those crimes of the heart, that defile a man. And St. Paul, *Rom. i. 29.* gives it a place in that black list of sins, of which he pronounces, *v. 32.* *that they who do such things are worthy of death; even the second death,* of a miserable eternity. And again, *1 Cor. vi. 10.* he declares that the covetous shall never *possess the kingdom of God:* And *Eph. v. 5.* that they *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.* And shall not the thunder of so many terrible sentences, pronounced by the Spirit of God, against covetousness, deter Christians from this unhappy love of money?

Consider 2dly, from the word of God, that these riches, which men so earnestly covet, are not capable of making them happy, or of satisfying the heart.

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A covetous man, saith Solomon, Eccles. v. 6, shall not be satisfied with money: and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them. O! daily experience confirms to us that truth, which this wisest of men had learnt by his own experience, that the wealth of this world, instead of bringing along with it true content, and peace, to the soul, is generally attended with nothing but *vanity and vexation of mind*, Eccles. ii. 11. Riches are *deceitful*, St. Mat. xiii. because they promise a happiness, which they cannot give; they are *thorns* (ibidem) that wound, and gore the soul: and they expose the possessors to many dreadful dangers of losing their souls for ever: because it is hard to possess them, and not to abuse them, or put confidence in them, or at least set the heart too much upon them: witness that terrible sentence, Matt. xix. 24. *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Hence our Lord pronounces a *woe to the rich*, Luke vi. 24. because they have their consolation here. And the Apostle 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. warns us against the love of *riches*, as of all things the most dangerous and pernicious to our souls. O that men would be wise, and lay up in their hearts these Scripture truths! O that they would learn to despise these *false riches*, and only seek for such as are *true*; which men can neither give, nor take away! O that they would always seek to be *rich in good works*; and so to *lay up to themselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth can consume, nor thieves break through and steal!* Mat. vi. 20.

Consider 3dly, that the word of God recommends the remembrance of death, and of the shortness and uncertainty of human life, as a powerful remedy against *covetousness*. Alas! how quickly will death be with us! And where shall all our riches be then? *I will say to my soul, said the rich man, Luke xii. 19, 20. thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry.* But God said to him: *thou fool this night shall thy soul be called for; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* O how true it is, with

with regard to the worldly rich, that the satisfaction which they take, or propose to themselves in their wealth, is at the best but a dream: and that, when they have *slept out their short sleep, they find nothing in their hands*, Ps. lxxv. No: *we brought nothing with us into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out*, 1 Tim. vi. 7. Wherefore, *having food, and wherewith to be covered, let us be content*. Now these necessaries will never be wanting to such as *seek in the first place the kingdom of God, and his justice*: we have Christ's own word for it, Mat. vi. 33. Give ear again to the Apostle, Heb. xiii. 5. *Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have: for he hath said; I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee*.

Conclude to oppose these divine lessons, against all the temptations of covetousness and worldly solicitude. If you are poor by condition, be content with your condition: you are more like Jesus Christ, and his Saints. Take care not to lose by your murmuring, or impatience, the opportunity he gives you of merit. If you are rich; take occasion of humbling yourselves, to see the wide distance between your way of living, and that of your Saviour. Dread the dangers you are exposed to by your riches: and arm yourselves against them, by poverty of spirit, and humility: you have no other security for your souls.

OCT. 16. *On the vice of impurity.*

CONSIDER first, that the *lust of the flesh*, or the inordinate love of the unclean pleasures of the flesh, is another raging plague, that has spread itself over the whole earth: and as it once brought down from heaven the waters of the deluge, which drowned all the world; and at another time fire and brimstone, which consumed whole cities, with all their inhabitants: so it daily calls down the vengeance of heaven, executed by visible, or invisible judgments, upon thousands, cut off before their time, in the midst of their sins, and cast down headlong into the bottomless pit. The Scripture has abundantly declared, how detestable this vice is in the

the sight of God; by positively assuring us, in many places, that such as are guilty of it, in any of its kinds, shall never enter the kingdom of heaven; (Rom. i. 1. 1 Cor. vi. Gal. v. Eph. v. Apoc. xxi. and xxii.) and in particular, in the account it gives of the causes of the deluge, Gen. vi. by informing us, that the general wickedness of men in this line was so odious in the sight of their maker, that he was grieved with it to the heart, and even *repented him that he had made them*, verse 5, 6, 7. By which strong figures of speech, the Holy Spirit would have us to understand, how enormous this vice of impurity is in the eyes of God, seeing that he, who by nature is incapable of grief or repentance, or any other passion, was determined by the hatred he bears to it, to destroy all these his creatures, whom before he had so much favoured and loved.

Consider 2dly, that what makes the vice of *the lust of the flesh* so odious in the sight of God, is its particular opposition to *his purity and sanctity*: by its defiling, in a most shameful and beastly manner, that *temple*, which he has sanctified for himself: and this more especially with regard to Christians; whose bodies and souls have both of them been dedicated, and consecrated to him, in their baptism; both of which, by their yielding to impurity, are shamefully violated and profaned; are brought down to the resemblance of brute beasts; and given up to be the hold of unclean devils. *Know you not that you are the temple of God*, saith St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. *and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* *But if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy.* And again, chap. vi. 15. *Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ, &c.* And (v. 19.) *the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God.* And *you are not your own.* *For you are bought with a great price: glorify and carry God in your body.* O Christians, attend to this heavenly doctrine; and see you never more presume to be guilty of so crying a sacrilege, as to profane and defile the temple of the living God; to drive him out of his temple, and set up filthy idols in his

his place: see you never bring in the devil thither, and sacrifice your soul to him, for the sake of a base filthy carnal satisfaction, that can last but for a moment.

Consider godly, the dreadful consequences of yielding to the vice of impurity, and the dismal slavery to which it reduces the soul. One act presently begets a habit, or violent inclination; this drags the poor soul on to new crimes; and by indulging these a custom is formed, which turns into a second nature, infinitely hard to be overcome; and which, without ceasing, exercises a most cruel tyranny over the soul. Hence follow all those worst of evils, which St. Gregory (l. xxxi. Moral. c. 31.) calls *the daughters of luxury*, or lust, as being the usual effects of a habit of impurity: *viz.* a blindness, and hardness of heart; a running headlong into the worst of dangers; a thoughtlessness, and insensibility with regard to the judgments of God, and the truths of eternity; an inconstancy, with regard to every thing that is good; an aversion to God, and to his service; and a perpetual love, and seeking of one's self; a strong attachment to this world; and a horror, or despair, with regard to the world to come. Such is the unhappy offspring of lust: a train of evils, not to be matched on this side of hell. Sweet Jesu, deliver us both from the mother, and the daughters!

Conclude to fly from all impurity, more than death; and from all the dangerous company, or other occasions, that may expose thee to temptations in this kind, more than from a house infected with the plague. The pestilence can only take away the temporal life of the body; but impurity will kill the soul for eternity.

OCT. 17. *Prescriptions against impurity.*

CONSIDER first, that the most necessary of all prescriptions, and precautions, against impurity, is to keep at a distance from the danger; and to fly all the immediate occasions of it; more especially the company and conversation of all such persons as are a temptation to us: as also the reading of loose, or idle books, such as romances, plays, &c. the frequenting of masquerades

masquerades and comedies; the indulging too much the sensual appetite in eating and drinking; the giving too great a liberty to the eyes, (which are the *windows through which the death of lust usually enters into the soul*) or to roving imaginations, and dangerous amusements: and the leading an idle and dissipated life. The indulging one's self in all, or any of these ways, opens the gates of the soul to lust: and *he that loves the danger shall perish in it*, Eccl. iii. 27. This enemy is ever lying in wait for us, to shoot his fiery darts at our heart; we must then be always upon our guard, and keep ourselves, as much as possible, out of his reach: we must take the alarm at every motion of his, and dread the approach of danger: we must not play, or dally with him, by taking or admitting of any freedoms or liberties, even of a lesser degree: he that will venture to play with a wild beast must expect a mortal gripe. If our Lord has assured us, Mat. v. 28. that a wanton glance of the eye is capable to bring death to the soul, how much more a wanton touch, or embrace?

Consider 2dly, that our corrupt nature is so prone to this evil of impurity, and the allurements and temptations to it are so common, and withal so violent, especially in youth; that the *flight* of the occasions alone will not suffice to gain the victory over this vice, without frequent conflicts: (for whither shall we fly, where the flesh and the devil will not follow us?) and therefore it will be also necessary for us to *fight*; and consequently to provide ourselves with proper arms for this warfare: and as we are not strong enough of ourselves to overcome such formidable enemies, we must engage heaven on our side, in order to secure the victory. This infers the necessity, (if we would get the better of lust) of a diligence in all spiritual exercises; of frequent and fervent prayer; of frequenting the sacraments; of daily reading and meditating on divine truths; of having frequent recourse to the precious blood of Christ, the source of all grace, by a constant devotion to his sacred passion and death: and of earnestly craving the prayers and intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and of all

all the holy Angels and Saints. More especially, when we find ourselves assaulted with these temptations, we must resolutely resist the first motions of the enemy; by turning ourselves immediately to Jesus Christ crucified; calling upon him with all our power, *Lord save me, or I perish*; hiding ourselves in his wounds; and not ceasing to implore his mercy and grace, till the temptation ceases.

Consider 3dly, what kind of arms we must provide for this warfare: *viz.* a lively faith, and a strong confidence in Jesus Christ, joined with an humble diffidence in our own strength; (for if we have any dependance on the strength of our own resolutions, we shall certainly fall.) A sense also of the presence of God; and above all things, the fear and love of God. The fear of his divine judgments, that always hangs over the heads of wilful sinners; the remembrance of the approaches of death; the consideration of the worm that shall never die, and of the fire that shall never be quenched, prepared for the punishment of lust, are certainly powerful restraints to keep the soul from consenting to a crime, which she has reason to apprehend may be followed the next moment by death, judgment and hell. But the love of God is a still more powerful restraint; because it discovers such charms in his infinite beauty, and infinite goodness, as makes all the allurements of lust appear not only most wretched and contemptible, but also most odious and abominable.

Conclude to make use of all these prescriptions against this mortal enemy of thy soul. Fly whenever thou art able; for this is a war, in which thou art not allowed to seek the occasions of meeting with the enemy, or of facing him. When thou canst not fly, fight; but with thy eye turned away from the enemy, and fixed on Christ crucified. Make a good provision for thyself, by the help of daily meditations, of the fear and love of God; and he will give thee the victory.

OCT. 18. *On the virtue of chastity.*

CONSIDER first, the excellence of the virtue of *chastity*; which makes us, in this mortal flesh, resemble in some measure the Angels in heaven; (*Matt. xxii. 30.*) and which entitles us to be the special favourites of Jesus Christ, the lover of purity, and the spouse of pure souls: who, when he came amongst us, would not be born but of the purest of virgins; and ever shewed the most particular love to his virgin disciple St. John, to whom also, on account of his purity, he recommended his virgin mother, when he was dying on the cross, *John xix. 27.*) and who in heaven is ever followed by virgins, whithersoever he goeth; who sing before the throne, as it were a new canticle, which none of the rest of the blessed can sing. *Apocal. xiv. 3, 4.* Chastity is the lilly of virtues; the bright ornament of the soul: the profession and practice of which, by so many thousands, is one of the greatest evidences of the truth, and of the excellency of the Christian religion; of the wonderful grace it communicates to its followers; and of the purity and sanctity of the author of it. O my soul, let us ever esteem, love, and embrace, this angelical virtue, which makes its lovers the favourites of heaven.

Consider 2dly, in what manner this virtue is recommended to all Christians, by the Apostle, *1 Theſſ. iv. 3, 4, 7.* *This is the will of God, faith he, your sanctification* (that is, that you should be *pure* and *holy*) *that you should abstain from fornication* (from all uncleanness) *that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel* (his body) *in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust,* like the Gentiles, who know not God—for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness, that is, to purity and chastity. Yes Christians, the virtue of *chastity*, by the will and law of God, and by the sanctity of the Christian calling, is for all; married, as well as unmarried. The married must be *chaste*, not only by keeping their *bed undefiled*, with adultery, or any unnatural excess; but also by refraining from every thought, word

or

or action, that is not confined within the sacred limits, fixed by the divine law of matrimony; or that is not referred to any of those holy ends, for which God instituted marriage. O how necessary is this conjugal chastity! O how many thousands are lost in this state, by allowing themselves many criminal liberties; and falsely imagining every thing to be lawful for them, which their unbridled passion fuggests! The unmarried also must keep themselves pure and chaste, by a constant care, absolutely to resist, or to renounce, all carnal pleasures; and all the irregular motions, or impressions of lust, either in body, or mind.

Consider 3dly, that, in order to procure, or maintain, this precious virtue of chastity; besides the necessity of fervent prayer, (for *no one can be continent, except God give it*, Wisd. viii. 21.) two other virtues are also necessary; without which chastity will not be able to stand her ground, for any long time, in the soul; viz. mortification and humility. By mortification, the *flesh* is brought under subjection to the *spirit*; and by humility, the *spirit* is subjected to God: and thus the whole man becomes regular and orderly, and easily resists the passions of lust. But where the *flesh* is unmortified, it grows headstrong and unruly; and where the *spirit* is proud, it is justly abandoned by God to the slavery of those shameful passions, from which it will never be delivered, but by humility.

Conclude to labour with all thy power, for the acquisition of this precious jewel of purity and chastity. O spare no cost to purchase it: it is worth all thou canst give for it, and infinitely more. But remember it will never stay long with thee; if thou give entertainment to its mortal enemies, intemperance and pride.

OCT. 19. *On the vice of anger.*

CONSIDER first, that *anger*, in the sense in which it is numbered amongst the capital sins, is *an inordinate love, or desire, of revenge*: and is a mortal sin, as often as the evil it-wishes, or the vengeance, or punishment, it pretends to take, is considerably contrary

trary, either to justice; or to Christian charity; that is, to that love we owe to every neighbour, by the law of Christ, even to our greatest enemies. Our anger, or desire of revenge, is contrary to justice, whenever the person we are angry with, has not deserved the punishment we desire to inflict; or, though he has deserved it, if we do not observe the order of justice: but make ourselves both judges, and executioners too, by taking revenge for ourselves, by our own private authority, which is never allowable. Our anger and desire of revenge is contrary to fraternal charity; when, let the cause be ever so just, we prosecute, or punish the offender, not out of the love of justice, but out of hatred, or ill-will to the person; or merely to gratify a disorderly passion. In such cases as these our anger and revenge is criminal, because it strikes at one, or both, of those principal virtues, of justice and charity: and where either of these is grievously wounded, there is no soundness in the soul.

Consider 2dly, that anger, passion, and desire of revenge, when deliberately consented to, are also infinitely opposite to those other favourite virtues of Jesus Christ, *meekness, humility, mercy, peace, patience, long-suffering, renouncing our own will, bearing the cross*, and the like; which are all of them strongly recommended by his Gospel, and jointly make up the amiable character of his disciples. These are the livery of his servants, by which he expects they should be known and distinguished. These we are to learn of him, *Mat. xi. 29.* If we do not endeavour seriously to study, and practise these lessons, he will not own us for his disciples: if we do not wear his livery, he will not acknowledge us for his servants. But how irreconcileable is this passion of anger, when it reigns in the soul, with every one of these Christian virtues! It directly destroys all *meekness*, and consequently *humility*, its individual companion; for anger generally springs from pride and self-love: it is a stranger to *mercy*, according to that of Solomon, *Prov. xxvii. 4.* *Anger hath no mercy:* it is even a short madness, that is capable, for the time

time it lasts, of inflicting the worst of evils, or desiring the worst of judgments: it breaks *peace*, both with God, and our neighbour; and banishes it from our own souls: it is the mortal enemy of *patience* and *long-suffering*, for it will endure to suffer nothing: much less will it admit of the renouncing of our own will, or of our submitting to *take up the cross*; because these are virtues, that strike at its very root; and destroy it wherever they meet with it; and therefore it cannot endure them. And shalt thou, my soul, any longer indulge a passion, that robs thee at once of all these lovely virtues; and, instead of a servant, and a disciple, makes thee an enemy of Jesus Christ?

Consider 3dly, what a train of other evils and sins usually accompany, or follow, this passion of anger: what oaths, curses, and blasphemies; what affronts, reproaches and injuries; what quarrels, strife and brawls; yea sometimes bloodshed and murder too; what malice, hatred and revenge: besides the scandal, that is given to those we are angry with; the robbing them not only of their peace, but also of the grace of God, by provoking them to sin; as one fire is apt to enkindle or nourish another. Not to speak of many other sad effects of this vice, which is frequently pernicious to the health of the body, as well as that of the soul; and makes them that are slaves to it, unsupportable both to themselves, and to all that have any dealings with them. O my soul, let us ever detest this infernal fury, which daily produces so much mischief in the world, to the eternal damnation of innumerable souls.

Conclude to give ear to the heavenly lessons against anger and revenge, so often inculcated in holy writ; to learn them well, and to follow them in practice. Rom. xii. 17, &c. *Render to no man evil for evil— if it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath: for it is written, revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat. &c. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* Eph. iv. 24, 26, &c. *Put on the new man,*

&c. Let not the sun set upon your anger—let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind to one another, &c. Gal. v. 19, &c. The works of the flesh are manifest—enmities, contentions, emulations, wrath, quarrels, dissensions, &c. Of which I foretel you—that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, &c. O how happy are the souls in whom the Spirit of God produces these fruits! But how miserable are they in whom the opposite spirit brings forth those other dead works of the flesh, the end of which is the second death!

OCT. 20. *Remedies against the vice of anger.*

CONSIDER first, that, in order to subdue the passion of anger, and to keep it within the bounds fixed by the divine law; we must *watch*, we must *pray*, and we must *fight* against it. But, to the end we may be quite in earnest in this warfare, we must, in the first place, be thoroughly convinced, how dangerous an enemy we have to deal with; that our all is here at stake: and that, if we suffer this tyrant to hold the dominion of our souls, neither the gift of tongues, nor prophesy, nor knowledge, nor faith, though strong enough to move mountains, or to raise the dead to life, nor giving our whole substance to the poor, nor our bodies to the flames, will ever bring us to Jesus Christ. Because, as long as we refuse to take up his yoke upon us, by denying ourselves, and learning of him to be meek and humble of heart, we are none of his; for we have not his Spirit. And therefore, he will declare to us: *I know you not: depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* O ye slaves to anger and revenge, have you ever well considered this? O how is it possible, that so many thousands, who pretend to believe the Gospel, and expect to be saved by it, should be so indifferent about the subduing this mortal enemy to the spirit of the Gospel, and to the salvation of their souls!

Consider

Consider 2dly, more in particular, those three prescriptions against this passion. viz. *watching, praying, and fighting.* First we must *watch* the motions of this enemy, whose attacks are the most dangerous, when they are sudden and unforeseen: and therefore we must forecast, for example, in the morning, the occasions in which we may likely meet with provocations, or temptations; that so we may either decline them, or, at least, prepare and arm ourselves against them. Secondly we must *pray*, with all the fervour and earnestness of our soul, for the victory, which God alone can give; and we must pray with an humble distrust in ourselves, and an entire confidence in God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the great pattern of meekness, patience and humility. Thirdly we must *fight*; by resisting, without delay, the first assaults of the enemy; by calling in all the powers of the soul, to still the storm that begins to arise; by running to the embraces of the cross; by turning away from the temptation, and going out of the company; or at least by keeping silence, till the commotion is over; or answering nothing, but with sweetness and meekness.

Consider 3dly, that in order to overcome our passion, we must also learn to despise and humble ourselves: for anger usually proceeds from an unhappy pride, which makes us ever unwilling to be thwarted, or contradicted, or opposed by any one; and therefore makes us swell with indignation, and fly at them that oppose us, and seek to revenge every little slight we receive either in word, or deed. Alas! if we did but know ourselves, and what poor wretches indeed we are; and what we have deserved by our sins; there would be no room left for our being angry with any person, for either slighting, or offending us; who, by our having so often, and so grievously, offended our Creator, have justly deserved that all his creatures shoul'd rise up against us, and revenge his cause upon us: and that they should both despise us, and abhor us.

Conclude

Conclude to make use of all these remedies against this unhappy passion; and never to make any truce with it, till thou hast brought it under: otherwise it will fill thee with sin; and will never suffer either peace or grace to abide in thy soul.

OCT. 21. *On the vice of intemperance.*

CONSIDER first, that another capital enemy of the soul is the vice of *intemperance*; that is, of immoderation; or excess, in eating, or drinking: which is a mortal sin, as often as it exposes a person to the danger of a considerable prejudice, either in his soul, or body, health, or reason; or when it shortens his days, as it frequently happens, like a slow poison; though the effects of it are not immediately perceived: and in general, when, for the sake of the pleasure in eating or drinking, a person does not hesitate to transgress the commandments of God, or the church; or otherwise sets his affection so much upon gratifying his sensual appetite, as to make this the study and business of his life; like those of whom the Apostle says, *Phil. iii.* that they *make a God of their belly*; and of whom he pronounces, with tears, that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ, and that their end is destruction*. O how true it is, that the vice of intemperance is absolutely irreconcileable with the spirit of Christianity, and with that penitential and mortified life, which is enjoined by the Gospel, as the narrow way that leads to everlasting life! O! it is an enemy indeed to the cross of Christ.

Consider 2dly, the innumerable evils in every kind, that are the daily consequences of sins of intemperance. How they change men into brutes; rob them of their reason; destroy their health; bring upon them a variety of diseases; shorten their lives; consume their substance; disturb the peace of their families; withdraw from their wives and children their necessary subsistence; give scandal and bad example to their neighbours; foment their passions and lusts; enslave them to their sensual inclinations; make them unfit for prayer, and other spiritual exercises; and quite dull and insensible

sensible to the things of God: in a word, how they shut the gate against the grace of God, and all that is good, and open it to all that is evil. The consequence of which is, that these sins, when indulged, and once come to a habit, are the most difficult of all to be cured; and too often, not to say generally, follow men to their graves; and plunge their impenitent souls into those flames, where, with the rich glutton, (*Luke xvi.*) they shall hunger and thirst for all eternity, and never obtain the least refreshment.

Consider godly, in what manner the Holy Ghost declares himself against this vice of intemperance, in the word of God. *Who hath woe?* saith Solomon, *Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.* *Whose father hath woe?* *Who hath contentions?* *Who falls into pits?* *Who hath wounds without cause, &c.* Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups. *Eccl. xix. 2.* *Wine and women make wise men fall away, &c.* *Isaiah v. 22.* *Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness.* *St. Luke xxi. 34.* *Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness—and that day come upon you suddenly.* *Rom. xiii. 12, 13.* *Let us cast off the works of darkness, &c.—Walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, &c.* *1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.* *Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers—nor drunkards, &c. shall possess the kingdom of God.* *Gal. v. 19, &c.* *The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness—drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I foretel you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.* O see ye gluttons and drunkards, enemies of the cross of Christ, where your portion is like to be, since you have no share in the kingdom of God.

Conclude to meditate well upon these Scripture-truths, and these dreadful woes pronounced against intemperance; and never be so foolish and mad, as to sell thy birth-right in God's eternal kingdom, with all the ravishing joys of his heavenly banquet, for so mean, so

nnworthy, so beastly a thing, as the gratifying for a moment thy sensual appetite.

OCT. 22. *Prescriptions against intemperance.*

CONSIDER first, that, in order to overcome the vice of intemperance, one of the first and most necessary prescriptions, is to fly the occasions of it, and to keep, as much as possible, at a distance from the danger, which is always at hand in the revellings, or drinking-bouts, of worldlings: and ought always to be apprehended, in such places and companies, where excess is promoted, and encouraged by common practice, and example. Let not him that has already experienced his own weakness, by falling into sin, in such occasions, venture himself any more there. The burnt child ought to dread the fire. Much less should he, that has unhappily contracted a habit of intemperance, expose himself to such places or companies, whatever the consequences of the refusal may be: he will never get the better of that pernicious habit, so long as he frequents such places and such company. Let no man here deceive himself, with pretexts of civility, or necessity: his soul is at stake; eternity is at stake. O let him not risk his all, for fear of displeasing drunken companions! The plague is amongst them: let him fly far away from the infection. The devil is amongst them: there is death in their cups; a mortal poison, that reaches even to the soul. Hell is following them close at the heels; let him keep off from them, lest he also be involved in their destruction.

Consider 2dly, that the arms, which are to be employed against the vice of intemperance, are particularly *prayer*, and *mortification*. Fervent *prayer* frequently repeated, draws down the powerful assistance of God's grace; without which this evil, which is too natural to our corruption, is not to be overcome. And *mortification* disarms the enemy, by restraining the sensual appetite, and bringing it into due order and subjection. Every Christian, as such, ought to aim at leading a *mortified* life; in quality of a disciple of a crucified

crucified God, he must endeavour to walk in the *narrow way*, by a general *self-denial*; if he expects to arrive at true life, and would be acknowledged by his Lord and Master for one of his. How much more is every sinner, if he hopes to secure to himself the remission of his sins, by being a penitent indeed, obliged to expiate them by fasting, and other *mortifications*, and penitential exercises? Now the putting in practice this *mortification* and *penance*, which is so general a duty, will effectually deliver us from the tyranny of intemperance; and even cut off all the approaches of this enemy. O let us embrace then this happy means of gaining a compleat victory over this mortal evil, and all its wretched train of sins!

Consider 3dly, that the most sovereign means of all for subduing intemperance, and indeed all other vices, is a daily application of the soul to the study of *true wisdom*; by the exercise of recollection and mental prayer, and the contemplation of heavenly truths. This helps the soul to another kind of appetite, which will grow daily upon her, for the things of God; and gives her a loathing and disgust for all sensual and carnal satisfactions. The relish of truth, the sweet favour of the heavenly manna, found in the conversation with God in our interiour; the consideration and meditation on his eternal feast, where he will *inebriate* his guests with the never-failing plenty of his house, and make them drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life, which is with him; is abundantly sufficient to wean the soul, that accustoms herself to this kind of diet, from all sensual affections; and to give her an effectual and eternal abhorrence for all those husks of swine, that keep earthly-minded Christians both from the table, and from the kingdom, of their heavenly father.

Conclude to follow these prescriptions, if thou wouldest effectually be preserved from, or cured of, this mortal disease of intemperance. Even in thy ordinary meals, and necessary refreshment, let not sensuality hurry thee away to indulge thyself in eating and drinking, merely for

for the pleasure of it ; but take that necessary support of nature, with a pure intention, in obedience to the will of God, as a medicine for the preserving thy health ; and season it with the remembrance of the gall and vinegar of thy Saviour.

OCT. 23. *On the vice of envy.*

CONSIDER first, that *envy* is a repining, or an uneasiness of mind, at another's good, which the envious man conceives to be an evil to himself, as lessening, or obscuring his glory, or the esteem and excellence which he aims at. So that envy, though commonly reckoned amongst the capital sins, because of the many other crimes that spring from it, is indeed a daughter of pride ; and, generally speaking, bears her company, and sticks close to this her unhappy mother ! ' The proud,' as St. Augustine takes notice, ' through the love they have to their own excelling, envy them that are their equals, because they come up to them ; their inferiors, from an apprehension lest they should become their equals ; and them that are superior to them, because they cannot equal them.' This envy, like her mother, is a mortal sin, of the spiritual kind ; which makes a dreadful havock in the soul ; and yet, too often, is scarce taken notice of by the unthinking children of the world. Christians, look well into yourselves, that this devouring serpent may have no lurking hole in your interiour, there no prey upon the vitals of your soul. Watch and pray continually against it.

Consider 2dly, that the malignity of envy proceeds from its direct opposition to charity, the queen of all virtues. For charity is a joy in the glory of God, and in the good of our neighbours : whereas envy grieves at both the one and the other. God ought to be glorified, for all his gifts and graces, which, with a bountiful hand, he so plentifully bestows upon his creatures. Now the envious man, instead of giving glory to God, on these occasions, is grieved at his goodness, and would willingly, if he could, stop up the channel of his divine bounties :

bounties : and can there be a greater perversity ? Again, the love that we owe to our neighbours, by Christian charity, requires that we should consider their good as our own ; and thus the good Christian meets with daily occasions of satisfaction and joy, in every good thing that befalls any one of his neighbours ; because the charity he has for them makes him consider them all as his dear friends and brethren in Christ. But envy grieves where charity rejoices, and makes its slaves every day more and more miserable, by giving them fresh sadness and pain, as often as they see or hear of any advantage of their neighbours. And is not this again a strange perversity, to prefer sadness before joy, and all the gnawings and gripings of envy before the sweets of charity ? But how true it is, that sin can never escape unpunished ; since every vice, (but more particularly envy) carries with it, even here, its own torment ; besides the judgment of hell it will meet with hereafter. *O thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right !*

Consider 3dly, the malignity of this vice of envy, from its hideous offspring, that is, from the innumerable crimes it gives birth to. Envy is the parent of hatred and malice. The envious are always prone to judge, censure, and condemn, their neighbours ; to put the worst construction upon all they say or do ; and daily to backbite and flander them. They are generally whisperers and tale-bearers ; seeking upon every occasion, to set all others against them whom they envy : they ever oppose, both by word and action, whatsoever tends to their good ; and take a malicious satisfaction in all the evil that happens to them. And what mischief is there that such a disposition as this is not capable of ? Oh ! it is true that even the greatest of all crimes have often proceeded from envy. It was envy that made Cain murder his brother Abel ; it was envy made the brethren of Joseph sell him into Egypt : it was envy made Saul so often seek the life of David : in fine, it was through envy, the Jews crucified the Son of God.

Conclude to detest this monster, with all its imps ; and to resist, with all thy power, even the first motions
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of it. It is a child of the devil, *by whose envy death, and all other evils, first came into the world*; and who is continually seeking our ruin, through pure envy, without any manner of advantage to himself. O let us hate and abhor it!

OCT. 24. *Remedies against envy.*

CONSIDER first, that, in order to subdue effectually the passion of envy, we must lay the axe to the root, by a serious application of our souls to extirpate pride and vain-glory; and all that unhappy self-love, which gives birth to this passion, and which continually nourishes it; and to plant in its place, the true knowledge of ourselves, and humility. These two blessed virtues always bring along with them light and truth; and easily dispel the darkness and error, which serve for a covert for envy. Because the true knowledge of ourselves, and humility, clearly shew how little reason we have to be either conceited of ourselves, or our own excellence; and how groundless and unjust all our pretensions are, either to the favour, or esteem of others, or to any preference before others. Now this conviction makes us willing to be overlooked, and despised by every one; and to sit down in the lowest place, as most suitable to our deserts; and consequently leaves no room for us to repine at any one's being esteemed, or preferred before us, or having any other advantage whatsoever. And thus the light of truth, which humility communicates to the soul, effectually banishes from her this vice of envy, which delights in darkness, and cannot endure the light. If then, my soul, thou wouldest be out of the reach of this hellish monster, learn to be truly humble; for an humble soul can never be envious.

Consider 2dly, that the most sovereign remedy against envy, is to labour to settle the soul in that perfect union, and universal charity, which the Son of God requires of us all, as absolutely necessary to our salvation, and as the true test of our being his disciples. This charity directly attacks the monster, wheresoever it finds it, and gives no quarter to any of its offspring. Wheresoever charity

charity reigns, envy, hatred, malice, backbiting, and all the rest of that cursed train, immediately fly away. O blessed charity, which bringest along with thee all other virtues; and which drivest away all vice! Come thou then, and take up thy eternal abode in my soul: I know that without thee I am nothing: and that whatsoever other advantages I may possess, if thou art wanting, they will avail me nothing. But all good things will come with thee. O, I will seek thee then without ceasing: I will prefer thee before all the treasures of the universe: I will spare no pains to find thee; no cost to purchase thee: I will live and die in thy embraces; and thou wilt deliver me from all my vices and passions, and bring me to my God. For my *God is charity.*

Consider 3dly, that envy, like all other vices, is to be overcome by fervent prayer, for imploring the divine assistance, without which we can do nothing: and by serious considerations and meditations upon the great Christian truths: more especially such as may effectually open the eyes of the soul to see the emptiness and vanity of all these worldly toys, and of all earthly and temporal things, which so suddenly vanish away; and the greatness of things eternal: that so the soul may despise and loath these lying follies, (the love of which nourishes both envy and pride) and set her heart only upon the eternal honours, riches, and pleasures, of the kingdom of heaven: where envy has no access; and where that perfect charity reigns, which makes the blessed take an inexpressible delight in each other's happiness, to the great increase of their own. O thus it ought to be with all Christians; since they all aspire to this same heavenly country, the place of everlasting peace and love; and have all manner of ties to oblige them to the strictest union and love; as they have all the same father and mother, God and his church: are all brethren in Christ; are all redeemed by his blood; and sanctified by his Spirit in baptism; and all partake of his body and blood, the sacrament of unity and love; and therefore ought all to have but one heart and one soul. O what a heaven should we have upon earth, if it were so with all

Christians ! There would be no occasion for prescriptions against envy.

Conclude to have recourse, upon all occasions, to these three excellent antidotes, humility, charity, and prayer ; and the subtle poison of envy shall not have any force upon thee. Oh ! how blind, how unhappy are they, who, through envy become evil themselves, by occasion of another's good ; and are so perverse in their choice, as to prefer the bitterness and racking pains of this vice, before the pleasure and satisfaction of charity.

OCT. 25. *On the vice of spiritual sloth.*

CONSIDER first, that *spiritual sloth* is a most pernicious evil ; whether we consider it in a more general acceptation, as it is a laziness of spirit, or a backwardness, negligence, and carelessness, with regard to all the things of God, and all Christian virtues ; with a loathing and repugnance to the taking any pains for the acquisition of them : or, as it is taken by divines, when they number it amongst the seven capital sins, as it is a particular indisposition of the soul, with regard to the love of God, opposite to the virtues of godliness, devotion and prayer ; and a loathing, as it were, of divine love in the soul. The former is a more extensive evil, an enemy to all virtue in general, by opposing them all ; and a mother, or nurse, of all other vices, by letting them all in, and nourishing them all in the soul. The latter is particularly opposite to the divine virtue of charity, the queen of all virtues, and to the glory of God's name, and his kingdom in our souls. And therefore, when it is considerable in its kind, it is a great mortal sin ; by reason of its direct opposition to divine love, which it banishes from the soul. And no wonder, for if it be a great crime to oppose the spiritual good of our neighbour, envying, or resisting the reign of the love of God in his soul ; it must be no less criminal, to withstand and oppose the coming of the kingdom of God's grace, and his love into our own souls.

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Consider 2dly, the numberless evils that flow from this vice of *spiritual sloth*, when once it possesses the soul; more especially in the way of sins of omission: such as the neglect of prayer, and of all other religious exercises; the keeping away from the sacrament; and consequently the stopping up, or turning off from the soul, all the channels of divine grace; and laying her open, unguarded, and defenceless, to all her enemies. And thus the slothful soul is made a daily prey to Satan, and to sin; and lives, in a manner, without God. Hence the daughters of this *spiritual sloth*, according to St. Gregory, are 1. *Despair*, or giving up the cause of God, and of the soul; so as to have neither hope nor concern for one's eternal salvation. 2. *Pusillanimity*, or cowardice, dreading, or flying from the least pains or labour in the service of God. 3. A *numbness* of soul with regard to all the divine precepts. 4. *Malice*, or an aversion to all sanctity, and to the professors of it. 5. A *rancour*, or indignation, against all such as seek to bring us to God. And lastly, a *dissipation* of mind, turned away from the things of God, and always running after creatures. From the unhappy fruits, you may judge of the naughtiness of the tree, which produces them: and learn to dread so pernicious a vice.

Consider 3dly, that this vice of sloth is the more dangerous; because, like the rest of the *spiritual sins*, it lies deeper in the soul, and is easier overlooked, by such as will not take the pains to think, and to examine well the state of their interior. *Carnal sins* are more easily discovered; because their guilt carries with it a greater shame in the eyes of men; which makes it fly in the face of the sinner, so that he cannot disguise it: but *spiritual sins* are more heinous in the eyes of God, though not so much considered by men; and often not regarded at all. And thus, as thousands live and die, under the mortal guilt of the *spiritual vices* of *pride*, *envy*, *hatred*, or *covetousness*, unregarded and unrepented of; so it is to be feared thousands live and die under the mortal guilt of *spiritual sloth*, unregarded and unrepented of. For what other judgment can we make of those sloth-

ful servants, whom the gospel so loudly condemns? Or what can be said in favour of them, who being sent into this world upon no other busines, but to learn to love and to serve their God: through this unhappy *sloth*, live and die, without so much as once seriously thinking upon this great business; much less putting it in execution?

Conclude to look well to thyself, and to examine thyself well, how thy heart stands affected with regard to the glory of God's name, the advancement of his kingdom within thee, and the reign of his love. If this be what thou seekest in the first place, all is well: but if thou admittest of a loathing or repugnance to this, and givest the preference in thy heart to every thing else; assure thyself that the demon of spiritual sloth possesses thy soul, and that God has no share in thee.

OCT. 26. *On the remedies against spiritual sloth.*

CONSIDER first, that the sovereign remedy against spiritual sloth, is the daily practice of consideration; particularly by meditating on those moving truths, which either represent to us the infinite goodness of our God, his love for us, the passion of his Son, and the innumerable motives we have to love him, and to be fervent in his service: or else denounce to us his many judgments, both in time and eternity, upon the obstinate opposers of his grace, and the rebels to his love. O what heart can be so far hardened by sloth, as to stand out against such meditations as these, when frequently repeated! We have a God to serve, and a soul to save. This God is infinitely good, and good to us. He is all goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfection: he is infinitely lovely; and he is our antient and eternal lover: his Son came down from heaven for the love of us: he employed his whole life in seeking our salvation; he even died for the love of us: we have received, and daily do receive many great benefits from him: his thought is always upon us. And shall not the consideration of all this his goodness and love for us, oblige us to be fervent in the love of him, and diligent

diligent in his service? If we love him, and serve him as we ought, he will be our *protector* here, and our *reward exceeding great* hereafter. If we neglect his love and service, he threatens us with eternal evils; and death, judgment, and hell, are always following us at our heels. And shall not the remembrance of all his promises on the one hand, and of all his threats and judgments on the other, effectually rouse us up out of our slothful indolence, and spur us on to labour in earnest for the securing our eternal salvation?

Consider 2dly, that another remedy against sloth, is often to reflect, that the short time of this life is given us, by our maker, for nothing else but to labour therein; and to labour for an eternity: that we can have no other stock to live on for eternity, but what we provide, and send before us, by working well, during the twelve hours of this short day of our mortal life: that every moment of this time is precious; it is even worth an eternity; because by the good employment of every moment, we may add to our eternal stock; and consequently to our eternal glory: that what we lose of it by sloth, is lost for ever; and that the loss is irreparable: that the night will be quickly with us, in which no man can work; and therefore that we must husband well this short, this precious time, and spend it to the best advantage; *labouring by good works to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Peter i. 10. O! what a strict account will one day be demanded of us, of the employment of this whole time? And where shall the slothful hide their heads at that day?

Consider 3dly, and set often before your eyes, in order to overcome all spiritual sloth, the life and death of the Son of God, the great pattern of a Christian; who was never idle; but always employed in doing the will of his Father. O how happy is the Christian, that endeavours to be always employed in this manner! Read also, and meditate often on the lives of the Saints; and excite yourselves to fervour in the service of God, by their example; and by the consideration of their eternal glory. O what pains do the children of this

this world daily take, what dangers do they expose themselves to, for the sake of a little dirt, which they must leave behind them to morrow? And is it not a shame that Christians should not do as much for a happy eternity? Remember also on all occasions that the eye of your great master is always upon you: and therefore take care to please him: not only by ever doing something; because such is his will and appointment: but also by labouring to perform all your actions, with that perfection, which becomes works, done for the service of so great a King.

Conclude to arm thyself, by these and such like considerations, against all the mischiefs, that are otherwise to be apprehended, from this pernicious vice of spiritual sloth: and that thou mayest keep thyself farther off from its approaches, beware of all tepidity or luke-warmness in the service of God. Often reflect upon the sentence that was passed upon the barren fig-tree, *Luke xiii*: and fear, lest if thou also content thyself with a shew of leaves, without bearing good fruit, the Lord of the vineyard may order thee also to be cut down, and cast into the fire.

OCT. 27. *On the Christian's warfare.*

CONSIDER first, that the life of a good Christian is a perpetual warfare; according to that of holy Job, *the life of man upon earth is a warfare*, Job vii. 1. His time of a true, settled, and solid peace, is not to come, till after many a conflict, and many a victory. He must fight his way to heaven, against a set of cruel, deceitful, and obstinate enemies, who will never let him alone, either in life or death. These are they, of whom the apostle writes, Eph. vii. 11, 12. *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in high places:* that is, against all the legions of demons, who dwell in this air that surrounds us. These wicked spirits mortally hate us; because we were created to fill up the places

places they have forfeited by sin: and therefore they never cease to employ a thousand tricks and artifices, a thousand snares, and allurements, to draw us away from God, into the pit of sin and damnation. But for our comfort, their power is greatly restrained; they can employ no force against us, nor do us any real hurt at all, except it be with our own free consent, by our unhappily yielding ourselves to them. And on the other hand, we have a far greater strength, engaged to fight on our side; not only of all the host of heaven, ever ready to guard and defend us: but even of the King of heaven himself; whose battles we are fighting; and who never forsakes his soldiers in the war, if they do not first desert from him. And what can the soldiers of Christ desire more. God is for us: what matter is it then who is against us? We are sure of victory; if we do not fling down our arms, and desert to the enemy.

Consider 2dly, that the *devil*, and all his wicked ones, knowing how little they can do against us of themselves, have unhappily engaged *the world*, and *the flesh*, to side with them, as auxiliaries in this warfare. Upon these they depend more than upon all their own troops: and these, in effect, annoy us more, and commonly do much more mischief to our souls, than all those spirits of darkness. By *the world*, we mean the whole collection of poor mortals, who have been already deluded by Satan, into the broad road of sin and perdition; and who have embraced, both in principles and practice, the wicked laws, maxims, and customs, which he has introduced; and continually propagate them, both by word and example. This is that *world*, the slave of Satan, and the mortal enemy of the Gospel of Christ, against which he so often pronounces his woes: this is that Babylon, the city of the devil, that is ever waging war against the people of God; and seeking to carry them away captives, and to subject them to its wicked laws. This wicked *world* is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, *1 John ii. 16.* This wicked *world*, and all its pomps,

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we have renounced at our baptism. Against this capital enemy of our souls we must fight till death.

Consider 3dly, that if *the world* be a dangerous enemy to a Christian soul; because it requires a great courage and strength, to go against the current of all its maxims and practices; and to despise both its allurements, and its censures: *the flesh*, on the other hand, is still more difficult to be overcome; because it is a domestic enemy, that is always at hand; even within this very castle of ours, which is continually besieged by the devil, and the world; it is a traitor, that holds a perpetual correspondence with these enemies; and is ever ready to open the gates of the soul to them. For by *the flesh* we mean, our own evil inclinations, passions, and lusts; which never cease to wage war against the spirit; and which violently incline us to take part with the devil and the world, against our God. Hence our Lord, in his Gospel, not only requires, that we should renounce all other things in the world, how near or dear soever they may be to us, to follow him: but more especially inculcates, that we must renounce also ourselves, and hate ourselves in this life, if we desire to be his disciples, and to save our souls. This then is the very chief part of the Christian's warfare; to fight continually against ourselves, and to spare no pains to subdue our own flesh, that is, all our corrupt inclinations and passions.

Conclude to declare an eternal war against all these three enemies: and to fight manfully against them till death: and thou shalt not fail to receive the crown of life.

OCT. 28. *On St. Simon, and St. Jude.*

CONSIDER first, the wonders of God in these, and in all the rest of the Apostles; whom he raised up as it were from the earth, and from the dunghill, and made them the princes of his people. *The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29. that he may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may*

may confound the strong: and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in his sight. The Apostles, when they were chosen by Christ, were poor, and contemptible in the eyes of the world; they were ignorant and illiterate: they had no power, credit, or interest, to recommend them; nor any one of those qualities which the world is fond of to make them shine in the eyes of men; and yet they are preferred by the wisdom of God, before all the wise, rich, eloquent, learned, noble, or great ones of this world; as most fit to be his instruments in the great work of the conversion of the world; and best qualified by their simplicity, and humility, to shew forth his glory. Adore here, my soul, the wonderful ways of God, and learn to prefer with him the things that this world despises, before all its false grandeur, deceitful appearances, and ostentation of wisdom.

Consider 2dly, the eminent dignity to which the Apostles were raised by our Lord: they were made his disciples, his individual companions, his familiar friends and confidents; yea his brethren too, *John xx. 17.* they were made, under him, the chief priests of the New Testament, the first bishops and pastors of his church, the prime ministers of his kingdom, the stewards and dispensers of all his mysteries; his ambassadors to men; his vicegerents upon earth; the doctors and teachers of the whole world; and, next after him, who is the chief corner-stone, the twelve foundations of his church, *Eph. ii. 20.* yea the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, *Apoc. xxi. 14.* Reflect also on the distinguishing graces, and the excellency of power, which our Lord conferred upon them, suitable to their great office and calling; such as the power of consecrating, and of offering in sacrifice his sacred body and blood; of remitting sins; and of opening or shutting heaven's gates to men; the commission of feeding his flock, and of ruling and directing his church, with the promise of the Holy Ghost to assist them therein, the authority of publishing through the whole world his new law, the law

law of grace; and the covenant of salvation through him, &c. Besides the gifts of tongues, and prophecy, and other eminent graces of the Holy Ghost; and a power of working all kind of miracles; yea even greater than those of Christ himself, *John* xiv. 12. Christians, bless your Saviour on the festivals of the Apostles, for all these great things he has done for them, and through them, for his church in general, and, in some degree, for every one of you in particular. For as they were, under Christ, the fathers and founders of the Christian religion, so, from them, and through their ministry, the faith, the word, the sacraments, the graces of Christ, and all spiritual goods and treasures, are derived down to your souls, by the channel of their successors in the church of Christ.

Consider 3dly, the eminent sanctity of the Apostles, on account of which they have been so highly honoured by all succeeding generations in the Christian church. They received great graces, and they faithfully co-operated with these graces: at the first call, they left all things else to follow Christ, and, as he bears them witness, *Luke* xx. 28. *they remained with him in his temptations.* They were indefatigable in their labours, for the propagating his kingdom, and for the salvation of souls: their zeal and courage was invincible: their love for him was stronger than death: they were ready to meet with death, in every shape, for his glory: they even rejoiced that they were esteemed worthy to suffer for his name. In a word, they were perfect, in an eminent degree, in all virtues. By their preaching and labours, by their doctrine and miracles, by their sufferings and death, they planted the faith and church of Christ throughout the world: but nothing contributed more to this great work than the sanctity of their lives: by the help of which, as well as by the fervour and efficacy of their prayers, they effectually established virtue, religion, and Christian perfection, in every place where they came, upon the ruins of infidelity and vice; and left behind them a succession of Saints, as the fruits of their labours; which has been kept up ever since in the

the true church of Christ: according to that of their divine master, *John xv. 16. I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.*

Conclude to celebrate, with a particular devotion, the festivals of the Apostles, as the most eminent amongst the favourites of God, and the fathers of the other Saints. Glorify God, who is wonderful in all his Saints, for the extraordinary wonders he has wrought, in them, and through them; and for that eternal glory to which he has raised them. But study also to learn, the great lessons they perpetually taught, both by word, and work; and to aim with all your power, at an imitation of their virtues and sanctity.

OCT. 29. *On the Christian's armour.*

CONSIDER first, that the life of a Christian here upon earth being a perpetual warfare, he is under a necessity of providing himself with proper armour, if he hopes to come off with victory. What this armour should be, we may learn from the Apostle, Eph. iv. 13, &c. *Take unto you, saith he, the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the spirit (which is the word of God) by all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance, &c.* How completely will that Christian be armed against all his enemies, that makes such a provision for himself as is here recommended by the Apostle, of arms, both defensive and offensive? Let us descend to each particular.

Consider therefore 2dly, that the soldier of Christ, in order to be fit to put on his armour, and to stand in the battle, without being hindered by his earthly garments,

ments, hanging loose about him, must first *gird up his loins*; that is, he must set out, with a firm resolution of restraining his passions and lusts, and all irregular affections to these earthly things, which very much incumber and hinder the Christian in his spiritual conflicts, and give the enemy a great hold of him. Now the *girdle* or belt he must make use of for this end is *truth*; for he must be *girt about with truth*, says the Apostle: that is, with sincerity, uprightness, Christian simplicity, and purity of intention, in his undertaking; having purely in view God and his soul, and being resolved at all events to fight till death, and to sacrifice on all occasions his dearest inclinations to the love of God, and the salvation of his soul. Thus must he begin; and then proceed to *put on the breast-plate*, or coat of mail, of *Christian justice*: by which is here understood not one particular virtue, but the collection of them all; which the soldier of Christ must labour to furnish himself with, against the temptations of all their opposite vices. He must also have his *feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. But what is meant by this? The *feet* of the soul are her affections, by which she moves towards the things she loves. These in the Christian soldier must be properly *shod*; *with the preparation*, that is, with the readiness and promptitude of the soul, to direct all her steps, not towards the lying vanities and fooleries of the world, in which there is *no peace*; but to walk in the ways of the *gospel*, which alone can ensure to us any true *peace*, either for time or *eternity*.

Consider 3dly, that after these previous dispositions, and general preparations for the spiritual warfare; the Apostle recommends as the chief pieces of the Christians armour, *the shield of faith*, which has a particular efficacy to *extinguish all the fiery darts*, levelled at us by the wicked one; and *the helmet of salvation*, that is, divine hope, which protects the head of the soul, from being wounded by any of his weapons. Yes Christians, if you would keep your souls from being pierced with the hellish darts of Satan, you must take care to

carry

carry about with you the *shield of faith*, that is a strong and lively belief of the great truths of the gospel; with a sense of the presence of God; and a remembrance of death, judgment, heaven and hell, and you shall be out of their reach. But then you must also provide yourselves with the *helmet of hope*; by joining an absolute distrust in yourselves, with an entire confidence in God: lest otherwise your head be left naked and exposed on all sides to the wounds of the enemy, and there be no soundness in it: which is the case of all those, who in this kind of warfare, build upon themselves, and not upon our Lord.

Conclude to spare no pains to procure every part of this heavenly armour; that you may be able to fight the battles of your Lord, in such manner as to overcome his, and your enemies, and to triumph eternally with him. Especially take care to secure to yourselves the *shield of a lively faith*, by the means of daily meditations on the truths of eternity.

OCT. 30. *On the Christians conflict.*

CONSIDER first, that in this spiritual warfare, the Christian soldier must not only be furnished with arms of defence, such as breast-plate, shield and helmet, but he also must provide himself with a proper sword, with which he may be able to attack, and to beat down the enemy. Now this *sword of the spirit*, or spiritual sword, to be employed in the Christian's conflict, is, according to the Apostle, *the word of God*. The truths of *God's heavenly word*, heard from his ministers, or read in good books, and received as the seed of life, and laid up in the heart; when embraced with a lively faith; and pondered at leisure by deep meditation; serve in a double capacity, both to defend us, and to annoy the enemy: they are both *a shield*, and *a sword*. They are *a shield*, because the continual remembrance of these great truths baffles and defeats all the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil; none of them have any force against a soul that daily meditates on *God's holy word*; and enters into the

true spirit of it. And they are *a sword* too, which none of them all can withstand, when drawn against them; by a lively faith: it attacks them where ever it meets them, and never fails of victory; it beats down all their fortifications; and forces them out of all their entrenchments. Such is the efficacy of daily meditation on divine truths; it roots out all vices, and establishes all virtues.

Consider 2dly, that in the Christian's conflict, this *sword of the spirit*, is to be used, according to the Apostle, in such manner as to be accompanied with *all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with instance*. From which words we gather the great importance, yea the absolute necessity of fervent prayer in this our spiritual warfare: and that, not only in the time of more dangerous and obstinate temptations; but as he says, *at all times, and with instance*. Oh, it is the want of observing this prescription makes so many shamefully yield in the time of temptation! And indeed we may say with absolute truth, that no one is ever overcome, but for want of prayer, and that a neglect of prayer is the original cause of the fall of all them, that fall from God by sin: For his infinite goodness never forsakes them that do not first forsake him; he never withdraws his grace from them that do not first withdraw themselves from his grace, he is *faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength*; but will assuredly give us the victory, if we always cast ourselves upon him, by fervent and humble prayer.

Consider 3dly, that the Apostle prescribes to the Christian soldier, in order to overcome the enemy, to join *watching* with his prayer: agreeably to the doctrine of our Redeemer; who, on many occasions, enjoins to all his followers a perpetual watchfulness; and in particular the night before his passion bid his disciples *watch and pray*, lest they should *enter into temptation*, Matt. xxvi. 41. clearly intimating by these words, that our best and only security against being overcome by temptation is to join *watching with prayer*; and to oppose

pose these two against all our spiritual enemies; ever rememb'ring, that though our *spirit be willing, the flesh is frail*. And what makes this *watching* still more necessary, is the nature of this warfare, in which we are engaged against these wicked spirits, who are continually laying ambushes for us; and use a thousand deceipts to ensnare us; and oftener prevail by tricks and stratagems, or by coming upon us unawares, than by open assault.

Conclude to make proper use of these weapons, prescribed by the Apostle, and by our Lord himself, by filling thy mind with *the word*, and the *truths of God*, and by diligence in *watching* and *praying*: and all thy conflicts will be crowned with victory.

Oct. 31. *On the four cardinal virtues.*

CONSIDER first, that there are four moral virtues, which are called *cardinal*; because they are as it were *hinges*, upon which the whole life of a Christian must constantly move, if he would be good for any thing. These are *prudence*, *justice*, *fortitude*, and *temperance*: which the wise man tells us (*Wisdom viii. 7.*) are all taught by divine Wisdom, and are *such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life*. All other moral virtues have a necessary dependence on these four: they all fall to the ground, without them. Every virtue must be *prudent* and *discreet*, in all it takes in hand; otherwise it degenerates into vice: every virtue must be *just*; by rendering, on all occasions, what is due to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbours. Every virtue must be *stout* and *valiant*, firm, and constant, in adhering to what is right, and opposing what is wrong. And every virtue must be *sober* and *temperate*, lest it exceed the bounds of due moderation, prescribed by right reason and religion. But O what treasures of virtues do they possess, that have acquired these four principal ones! These will effectually arm them against all vices.

Consider 2dly, that Christian *prudence* is a virtue which teaches us in all things, what is good, and what

is evil; what is right; and what is wrong; and what ought to be done, and what ought to be left undone, in all the occurrences of life. It is a virtue that directs all our words and actions, in such a manner, as that we neither decline out of the way, or offend ourselves, nor give occasion to others to offend; but ever setting before our eyes our great business and last end, make always a proper choice of the means that are to bring us to this great end; and apply them accordingly. It is a virtue that directs all other virtues, conducting them all by the royal middle way of our great king, that they may not go aside by excess, or defect, either to the right hand, or to the left. The offices of this great virtue are to design and *consult well*, to *judge right*, and to *direct well the execution*, of what has been rightly concerted, and judged to be proper. In all which it is helped indeed, by the *remembrance* of things past, by the *understanding* of things present, by the *fore-casting* of things to come, by reasoning, attention, caution, and circumspection; but all this with dependance on divine grace, and not on one's own industry; and with a continual application to our Lord, by frequent and fervent prayer, for his light and assistance: without which our prudence will avail us nothing.

Consider 3dly, the offices of the other three cardinal virtues, and the excellence of them. *Justice* renders to every one his due, and wrongs no one. It teaches to restrain every thought, every word, every action, and every omission too, that any ways tends to injure our neighbour, or that does not rightly square with that great principle of morality, *Do as thou wouldest be done by*. And with regard to God, (who has the most undoubted right, by all manner of titles, to our whole being, and to all our service) it obliges us, before all things to dedicate our whole hearts and souls to him by worship and love. Then *fortitude* arms the soul with invincible courage in her warfare against her spiritual enemies, and gives her strength and constancy to enable her to overcome all fear or dread of any of those evils which she may be exposed to in her mortal pilgrimage,

image, for doing her duty; and resolution to suffer every thing rather than to sin. Lastly *temperance* restrains all immoderation in eating or drinking; with all other excesses of our passions or lusts; and all that any way's carries us out of the due bounds, prescribed either by right reason, and the law of nature, or by the precepts of God, or of them that have their authority from him, in the employments or functions of any of our senses, whether exterior or interior. See, my soul, how admirable are all these virtues! O there is not a day, there is scarce an hour, of thy mortal life, in which thou dost not stand in need of them all.

Conclude to esteem and desire, love and seek, all these blessed virtues. O spare no pains to acquire them; they are richly worth all thy labour. But ever remember whose gifts they are; and that they must come to thee by fervent prayer. All thy labour, without this, will be labour in vain.

NOVEMBER 1. *On the feast of all the Saints.*

CONSIDER first, that, on this day, the church of God honours, with a solemn festival, the virtues, the triumphs, and the eternal glory of all the Saints and citizens of the heavenly Jerufalem. First, in order to give glory, praise, and thanksgiving, on their occasion, to the God of all the Saints; and to his Son Jesu Christ, the author of all their virtues, of all their triumphs, and of all their glory; and to honour the Lord in his Saints. Secondly to encourage all her children, to follow the glorious examples of the Saints; and to walk in their blessed footsteps; in hopes of arriving one day at their happy company. Thirdly to teach them, to associate themselves in the mean time to the Saints, by a holy *communion* with them; and to procure the assistance of their prayers and intercession. O how just, how pious, how wholesome it is, to glorify God in his Saints, who are the most excellent of all his works: to honour in them the bright trophies of the blood of Christ; to learn of them the practice of all Christian virtues, and especially of divine love; and to be admitted

ted to a share in their powerful prayers; and to a happy communion with them in all that is good! *You are come*, says the Apostle, *Heb. xii. 22. &c.* speaking to the children of the church, *to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of Angels; and to the church of the first born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, &c.* O happy communion indeed! O joyful festivity, in which the church militant solemnly associates herself with the whole church triumphant, in the worship, praise, and love, of their common Lord, through him that is the mediator of them both, and through the great sacrifice of his blood! See then, my soul, what ought to be thy devotion on this day.

Consider 2dly, on occasion of this festival, what encouragements we here meet with, to dedicate ourselves; in good earnest, to the holy service of our God; when we reflect on that *eternal weight of glory* in heaven, with which he rewards the light and momentary labours and sufferings of his servants here upon earth. All these holy ones, whose feast we celebrate this day, are entered into the never-ending joys of their Lord, at a very cheap and easy rate. The yoke of his divine servitude, which they bore for the short time of their pilgrimage, was very *sweet* to them, and their *burthen* was ever *light*. Grace and love made all things easy, that they either did or suffered, for their beloved. He himself supported them in such manner, as to carry, as it were, both them, and their crosses too, upon his own shoulders. He never left them, in life or death; till he took them to himself in his heavenly kingdom; where they are to live and reign for ever with him. My soul, hast not thou the same God as they had? Hast not thou the same Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has purchased the same kingdom for thee also, with his own most precious blood? Hast not thou the same sacraments and sacrifice, and all the same helps, and means of grace, as they had? Is the arm of God shortened?

shortened? Or is the source of his infinite goodness and mercy dried up, or diminished? Why then mayest not thou also aspire to the same glory and happiness? The Saints carried about with them heretofore the like flesh and blood as thou now dost: but their correspondence with the mercy and grace of God, raised them up from the dunghill of their corrupt nature, and made them Saints: the like correspondence with the divine mercy and grace, can do as much for thee also. O why then shouldst not thou also endeavour to be a Saint?

Consider 3dly, that as it is the love of God which makes Saints; so it is this divine love which we particularly honour in all the Saints. It is this heavenly love, which ought to be the great object of our attention, of our devotion, and of our imitation, on all the festivals of these generous lovers, and beloved of God: and more especially on this day, when we celebrate the virtues of them all, under one solemnity. O what strong invitations, what great encouragements have we here: what pressing calls to labour to sanctify our souls with divine love; when we have here set before our eyes all these millions of heavenly lovers, whom we honour in this festivity? This blessed virgin, *the queen and mother of beautiful love*; these innumerable legions of angelick spirits, these Cherubims and Seraphims all on fire with love; these patriarchs and prophets, constant and faithful lovers of their God; these Apostles of the Lamb, sent by him, to spread through all the earth the bright flames of love, which he sent down upon them from heaven; those armies of martyrs, all victims of love; who all laid down their lives for love; those millions of holy confessors, and all these *spirits of the just made perfect* by love, who, both in life and death, have been always true friends and servants of divine love; and now, for all eternity, shall shine and burn in its beautiful flames; all these virgins, in fine, the spouses of love, whose love for the Lamb was stronger than death, and who now follow him singing hymns of eternal love, wheresoever he goes. O let us draw near to this

this great fire, to this heavenly company of seraphick lovers; that our frozen hearts may receive some small heat at least from all their flames!

Conclude ever to love, honour and imitate the Saints of God: but more especially to love in them, what God loves in them; that is, the gifts of his divine grace; amongst which the most excellent is love. Thus shalt thou be best entitled both to the intercession of the Saints at present, and to their happy society hereafter.

Nov. 2. *On the commemoration of all souls.*

CONSIDER first, that on this day, the church of God, attending to the necessities of great numbers of her children, who are departed out of this life in her faith and communion; but not without some blemish of sin in their souls; some lesser stains at least, of *idle words*, or other venial offences; some *wood, hay or stubble* in their building, which cannot stand the fire; or some debt to divine justice, on account of former sins, not sufficiently expiated by penance; turns all her prayers and sacrifices towards the procuring for them, from the mercy of God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ her spouse, the remission of all their sins; and their speedy admittance into the happy regions of eternal rest, light and peace, in the company of the Saints. O my soul, how *holy and wholesome* is the institution of this day of expiation! O how full of piety and charity is this apostolical tradition, this religious practice of the church of God in all ages, *to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins!* 2 Machab. xii. 46. Alas, how few depart this life so *pure*, as to be immediately admitted to that blessed city above, where *nothing defiled can enter in!* Revel. xxi. 2. How few are fit to fly up to the embraces of the God of all purity, without some purgation after death! It is then a duty of Christian charity, incumbent on all the children of the church of Christ, *to assist by their prayers their brethren that are gone before*

before them, that they may be discharged from their sins, and may rest in peace.

Consider 2dly, that this kind of charity is highly pleasing to God; is very beneficial to the souls of the faithful departed: and is very wholesome to our own souls. The spiritual works of mercy are of all the most acceptable to God, the lover of souls. Now this is one of the spiritual works of mercy. It tends to feed these souls, that are hungry, with the plenty of God's house; to bring them to quench their thirst, at the fountain of life; to cloath them with immortal glory; to comfort and refresh them under their pains and sufferings; to loose their bands; to deliver them out of their prison; and to help them forward to their eternal home, which they so ardently long for. Now all this is most agreeable to the Father of mercies; who has a most tender love for these his children. It is doing these souls of our brethren the greatest charity imaginable; by contributing all that is in our power, to deliver them from all their evils, and to bring them to their sovereign good. And it is at the same time a most excellent means of obtaining mercy for ourselves also, whilst we shew this mercy to them; *for the merciful shall obtain mercy*, Matt. xi. 7. *it is making to ourselves friends, — who when we fail, may receive us into everlasting habitations*, Luke xvi. 9.

Consider 3dly, that this charity, which we owe to the souls of the faithful departed, is not only exercised by praying for them; but also by fasting, or other penitential austeries, offered up to God in their behalf, for the remission of their sins; as likewise by alms-deeds, performed with the like intention; according to the religious custom of former ages, and the practice of our pious ancestors, in their doles at the funerals of the dead. But the most effectual means of all to purge them from their sins, and to bring them to their God, is the offering up for them the great sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ; and presenting to God, in their favour, that most sacred victim, by which was cancelled the hand-writing, which was against us; and a general

neral atonement was made for all our sins. In the old law, the high priest once a year, *viz.* on the solemn feast of expiation (*Leviticus xvi.*) carried the blood of victims into the sanctuary, to make atonement for the sins of the people: but this was but a figure of what is done by our high priest; who is gone once for all into the sanctuary of heaven; not with the blood of goats, or calves, but with his own most sacred blood, shed here upon earth, for our sins; and now ceases not to exhibit the same to his Father; both by himself, in heaven, where he makes continual intercession for us; and hereby his ministers, in the sacred mysteries. This blood pleads strongly for the remission of sins: this is the source of all mercy and grace; this is plentifully applied to the souls, both of the living and the dead, by the great sacrifice of the altar.

Conclude to assist, to the best of thy power, the souls of the faithful departed, both by prayers, alms, and this holy oblation of the blood of Christ. Thy charity for them may stand thee in great stead, when their case shall come to be thy own. But remember withal, that the best thing thou canst do is to work now all thou canst, for thyself, whilst thou hast time; and to do full penance for thy sins in this life, that thy soul may not stand in need of these helps hereafter.

Nov. 3. *On the obligation of all Christians to be Saints.*

CONSIDER first, how often God has declared, in his word, that all his people ought to be Saints. *Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy;* was what he perpetually inculcated in the Old Testament: and in the New, the Son of God calls upon us all, *Matt. v. 48. Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* All Christians are called to be Saints, *Rom. 1. 7; to be holy, and without blemish, in the sight of God in charity.* *Eph. i. 4. a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people,* *1 Pet. ii. 9.* Hence the name of *Saints* is appropriated by St. Paul to all *Christians;* as if it were the same thing to be a *Christian,* and to be a *Saint:* which shews, that according to the doctrine

doctrine of the apostle, all Christians, as such, are at least obliged to endeavour to be Saints. This obligation is grounded, upon the sanctity of the God, whom we serve; of the gospel law, under which we live; of the holy institute, which we profess; of the great master, whom we follow; of the divine sacraments and sacrifice which we frequent; and of that sacred dedication and consecration, by which God has sanctified our souls for himself. O let us never forget the many motives we have to be Saints!

Consider 2dly, that our being Saints, is not merely a matter of counsel, or of greater perfection; it is a strict commandment; it is implied in the very first and chief ~~est~~ of all God's commandments. For though all are not commanded to work miracles; nor to exercise extraordinary austerities; nor to retire into desarts, to spend their whole time in prayer; nor to sell all they have, and give it to the poor, &c. (for there have been many very great Saints, that have not done any of these things.) Yet all are commanded *to love God with their whole heart, and with their whole soul, and with their whole mind, and with their whole strength.* Now this it is that makes Saints: and this is of strict obligation for all. Do this, my soul: keep this commandment; and thou also shalt be a Saint: but without this, none of those other things, nor all of them together, can make any one a Saint. Christians, reflect on the perfection and sanctity, which is required of you all, by this great commandment of divine love. *To love the Lord our God, with our whole heart, and all its affections; with our whole soul, and all its powers; with our whole mind, by directing all our thoughts to him; and with our whole strength, by dedicating to him all our actions.* O this is to be Saints indeed! Now this our God calls for: and nothing less will satisfy him: It is the very first of his commandments.

Consider 3dly, upon how many titles, this great God challenges our whole hearts and souls, by love and service: and consequently that we should be truly Saints; that is a people sanctified, and consecrated to **VOL IV.** H him.

him. 1. We are his *children*; and therefore ought to bear some resemblance with our Father, by an imitation of his sanctity. 2. Our souls are *espoused* to him, and aspire to an eternal union with him: now whatsoever is disagreeable to true sanctity defiles the soul and disqualifies her for that happy union. 3. We are his *temples*: the temples of God must be *ever holy*. 4. We are the *members* of Jesus Christ, we are engrafted in him; we are to live by his spirit, which is the spirit of sanctity. 5. We absolutely belong to God, by our creation; he gave us our being, and gave it us for no other end, but that we should be Saints. 6. The Son of God delivered himself up for us, by his passion and death, that he might *wash us from all our sins, in his own blood, and make us a kingdom and priests* (that is Saints) *to God and his Father*, Apoc. i. 5, 6. In fine by our baptismal vows, by our dedication to God, at that time; by our frequent participation of the body and blood of Christ in the divine sacrament; in consequence of which we ought to *abide in Christ*, the God of all sanctity, *and live by him*; and by innumerable other titles, we belong to God, and are strictly obliged to give our whole selves up without reserve to him; to *serve him in holiness, and justice all the days of our life*. And shall not all this convince us, of the necessity of our labouring in earnest to be Saints: and that this is both the will and the commandment of God?

Conclude to begin, from this very hour, a new and faintly life: by yielding thyself up a perpetual servant to divine love; and striving henceforward to make a daily progress in this heavenly virtue: this is the shortest and surest way to all sanctity and perfection.

Nov. 4. *On the means we all have to become Saints.*

CONSIDER first, that if our Lord calls upon us all to be Saints; and even commands us all to be Saints; he that never commands impossibilities, furnishes us also with the means, which if we make good use of, will make us Saints. Witness, those manifold graces, and spiritual helps, which he continually favours us with; which if we duly corresponded with, we

we should all be Saints. Witness that early knowledge he has given us of his heavenly truths; and those repeated invitations, with which he sweetly presses us, to turn from our sins, and to come to him. O if we did but welcome these first divine calls, how quickly would they produce in our souls strong desires of dedicating ourselves in good earnest to divine love! Now such strong desires as these are the beginning of true wisdom, and the very foundation of all sanctity. For since God desires we should be Saints, if we also sincerely desire it, the work will be done. Strong desires will make us earnest in prayer; they will make us diligent and fervent in all spiritual exercises. Strong desires will make us labour in earnest; we shall spare no pains in the acquisition of virtues, if our desires are strong indeed. Such desires as these, are that *hunger and thirst after justice*, recommended by our Lord, which never fails of being filled. Matt. v. 6. O who can complain of wanting the means to become a Saint, when strong desires may do the work!

Consider edly, the many particular helps for sanctity, which we meet with every where, in the church of God: which, as they have already made many great Saints, in every state and condition of life; are capable of doing as much for us; and will not fail of doing it, if we are not wanting to God, and to ourselves, by the abuse or neglect of them. Such are the sacraments, those conduits of divine grace, instituted by Jesus Christ, on purpose to make us Saints. Such, in particular, is that most holy sacrament, and divine sacrifice, of the body and blood of Christ; in which we have always amongst us, and may daily approach to, the very fountain of all sanctity. O! my soul, one good and perfect communion might suffice to make thee a Saint. Such again is the word of God, which is so often preached to us; or read by us: the truths of eternity, so often set before us: the gospel of Jesus Christ: the lives of the Saints; the great examples of the living servants of God: the mysteries relating to our redemption, which we so often celebrate in the publick worship

ship of the church, in such manner, as to make them as it were present to the eyes of our souls: with abundance of other spiritual advantages, which are continually found in the communion of the true church of Christ. O Christians, let us never complain of our wanting the means to become Saints, when we have so many powerful graces and helps always at hand! If we are not Saints, it must be entirely our own fault. And, what an account shall we have one day to give for all these graces and helps, if we do not make good use of them!

Consider 3dly, that in order to be Saints, nothing is required on our parts, but what God on his part will make sweet and easy to us: *for his yoke is sweet, and his burthen is light.* We may apply to his commandment of our being Saints, what is written, Deut. xxx. 11, &c. *This commandment that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee: nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldest say; which of us can go up to heaven, to bring it to us:—nor is it beyond the sea; that thou mayest excuse thyself, and say, which of us can cross the sea, and bring it.—But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.* Yes, Christians, our God is very near us: he is in the very centre of our souls. With him are all the treasures of grace and sanctity: with him is the law of love, he is all love; he is a consuming fire, the property of which is to destroy all our vices, and to transform our souls into himself. He is the inexhaustible source of all our good. We have no need then to go far to find divine love, which makes Saints; since we have the very source of it within us: it is but turning into our own interior, by the diligent practice of recollection and mental prayer, and there we shall quickly meet with our God, and with his love; which will make all duties, and all labours sweet and easy to us. This is the shortest way to all good, and the most effectual means to make us Saints.

Conclude to embrace, and put in practice all these means of sanctity, which divine providence continually presents

presents thee with. Open the door of thy heart to every grace, with which God visits thee; and co-operate with it, to the full extent of thy power. Nourish in thy soul a great desire; a perfect hunger and thirst after the love of God, and all Christian perfection. Meditate often; read good books; be fervent in prayer, and in frequenting the sacraments. But particularly aim at a spirit of recollection, and a continual attention to God, in thy own interior; and frequent aspirations of love; and thou wilt quickly become a Saint.

Nov. 5. *On the perfection of our ordinary actions.*

CONSIDER first, the error of a great many Christians, in placing sanctity in such things as indeed are no part of it. Thus some suppose that in order to be a Saint, we must work miracles; now St. John the Baptist was one of the greatest of Saints; and yet wrought no miracle. *St. John x. 41.* And indeed one single act of humility, or self-denial, or of the love of God, goes farther towards the making a Saint, than even the raising the dead to life. Others again vainly imagine, that sanctity consists in having visions, revelations, and extasies, or in the gifts of prophecy, of tongues, or of an eminent knowledge of the most sublime and divine truths: because they often meet with such things as these in the lives of Saints: but none of these things made them Saints; and they have been even found in such as were not Saints: whilst on the other hand many eminent Saints have had none of them: neither ought any humble Christian to desire, or to seek for such things as these; though every Christian ought to desire, and to endeavour to be a Saint. Nor does sanctity consist in much fasting, or in wearing hair shirts, or in taking disciplines, or in giving large alms; or in reciting long prayers, or in any other extraordinary practices or observances; all which, however good in themselves, have been found in hypocrites; or in such as have been, all the while, slaves to

pride, self-love and passion. But true sanctity consists in unfeigned charity, in both its branches, that is, both as it regards the love of God, and of our neighbours: it consists in a conformity with the will of God in all things, and adhering close to him; it consists in being humble of heart, and sincerely despising ourselves: it consists in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross, and following Christ. Such as do these things are Saints: but where any of these is wanting, there is no sanctity.

Consider 2dly, that sanctity does not so much depend upon doing *extraordinary* actions, as upon doing our *ordinary* actions *extraordinarily* well. Our life passes away, in the daily *ordinary* actions, which take up our time, from morning till night; such as our rising, our morning exercise, our daily labours, or the business of our calling, our regular devotions, and spiritual lectures, our meals, our conversation, the employment of our thoughts, when our hands are at work, our examination of conscience at night, and our evening exercise, &c. Now if all these daily performances are done *extraordinarily* well; our whole time will be spent *extraordinarily* well; and nothing more will be required to make us Saints. Neither will it cost us more to do them well; than to do them ill: on the contrary, the better we perform them, and the more diligent and fervent we are in them; the more easy and delightful, they will be to us; and the grace of God, and his blessing, will go along with all we do. O how inexcusable then are we, O my soul, if we do not strive to be Saints, when we may attain to this happiness, even by our daily ordinary actions, provided we perform them with due perfection!

Consider 3dly, that the perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity of intention, with which we perform them; on our attention to God, in all that we do; and our seasoning all our labours and employments, with frequent aspirations, and ejaculations of divine love; and frequent oblations of ourselves

selves, and of all that we do, to God. *By thy ordinance the day goeth on*, saith the royal Prophet, Ps. cxviii. 91. *for all things serve thee.* Yes, my soul, all things continually serve the Lord, but the rebel angels, and the rebellious will of man. Now this rebellious will of ours we bring to serve him, by beginning the day with an oblation of our whole selves to him; by directing all our thoughts, words, and actions, by a pure intention, to his glory; by making his holy will the rule of all we do; by beginning every work with an offering of what we are going to do, together with an offering of our hearts to him; and by often renewing this offering in the midst of our works; by doing all our actions, as much as we can, in his presence; and by intermingling acts of divine love with all we do. Thus shall all our days be *found to be full days*; thus shall they all *go on by God's ordinance*; thus shall they *all serve him*.

Conclude to take great care, to give to all thy ordinary actions their due perfection, by following these rules. And as to thy daily employments, and all the business, and labours of thy lawful calling; ever consider them, as appointed thee by the holy will of God; and ever perform them, in compliance with, and in obedience to his heavenly will; thus thou mayest make them all acts of virtue, and even acts of divine love. And if these thy daily employments be laborious, or otherwise mortifying, or disagreeable to thy self-love; thou mayest also make them acts of penance; by accepting of them, as imposed upon thee by God, for thy sins; and offering them up to God, in union with the labours and sufferings of Jesus Christ, for thy sins.

Nov. 6. *On the sanctity of the Christian's institute.*

CONSIDER first, that the Christian religion is in the nature of a religious order, or institute, founded by Jesus Christ, our Lord, and taking its name from him. The Son of God himself came down from heaven; to be the founder of the Christian order. It's origin

origin is *heavenly*. Its rule is *heavenly*: being God's own word; and the gospel of his Son. Its tendency is *heavenly*: it tends to deliver us from all those evils, both with regard to time, and eternity, in which we were unhappily involved, by our first parents transgression; particularly from the death of sin, and from the second death of hell; and to bring us to our sovereign Good, to all perfection of sanctity here, and to our true and eternal life hereafter. The means it furnishes us with for this end, are also *heavenly*: such as the communications of divine grace; the sacred mysteries and sacraments, of divine institution; the daily conversation with God by prayer; and the *communion of the saints*, or a happy association with all holy persons, in all holy things. The Christian makes his solemn religious profession, at the foot of the altar, at his baptism: there he engages himself by vows, to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to lead an innocent and saintly life: there he receives, for his habit, the white robe, denoting cleanness of heart, and innocence; with a charge to keep it all his life time, without spot or stain: there he puts on Jesus Christ, by a new birth, in order to a new and spiritual life, that may know no death. O! can any thing then be more holy than this sacred institute of the Christian order; where the founder, the rule, the exercise, the vows, the habit, and the whole manner of life, that it requires, are all most heavenly and divine!

Consider 2dly, the blindness and misery of the greatest part of Christians, who live in a strange insensibility, of the excellence of the Christian religion, of the obligation of it, and the sanctity it requires of them, in consequence of the alliance it gives them with the whole blessed Trinity. The dignity of a Christian is indeed very great. He has the honour to be enrolled in the service of the great King. He is made his domestick, his friend, his favourite. But this is not all; he is even adopted, through Jesus Christ, to be a child of God, and an heir of his eternal kingdom: he is engrafted, and incorporated in Christ; and made a member

bēr of that mystical body, of which the Son of God is the head: he is made partaker of his Spirit; of his kingly and priestly unction: and in some measure of his divine nature. The grace of Christianity is so great, that the Apostle writing to the Ephesians, seems to want words to express it. He calls it *the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the mystery hidden from eternity in God*, Eph. iv. 9. with a great deal more to the like purpose, as well with relation to the exceeding great goodness of God, manifested in his calling us, without any desert of ours, to so great a grace, as this of the Christian religion: as also with regard to the incomprehensible advantages, which this grace entitles us to. But O! may we not too justly apply to the greatest part of those, who are called to all these advantages, that of the royal Prophet, Ps. xlviii. 21. *Man when he was in honour did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them.* Alas! this seems to be the case of millions of Christians.

Consider ḡdly, that our eternal welfare absolutely depends, upon our living up to the character of a Christian, and to the duties and obligations, of the Christian religion: in particular those we have taken upon us by our baptismal vows, and which are insisted upon as essential, by our holy ruler and founder. These are all reduced into a small compass, in those words of the psalmist: *Turn away from evil and do good.* This is a short abstract of the whole duty of a Christian. The first part requires a settled determination of the soul, never to commit a wilful sin, for any consideration whatsoever; no not even if life itself were at stake. The second part requires a constant attention to do the will of God, in all things, and to advance every day in the love of God. Do this, my soul, and thou shalt be a Christian indeed: persevere in this until death, and thou shalt receive the crown of eternal life.

Conclude hence forward to have always before thy eyes both the dignity and the sanctity, of the character of a Christian; and to shew it forth in thy life: lest otherwise it rise in judgment against thee, and prove thy

thy greater condemnation at that day, when thou shalt be called to give an account of thy stewardship.

Nov. 7. *On following the light of Christ.*

CONSIDER first, those words of the Son of God, John viii. 12. *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* Poor man, by sin, had forfeited the true light; he was fallen from the light of truth, and life, when he fell from his God: he was fallen into the darkness of ignorance, error and vice; and was sitting in the shadow of death. God sent the true light from heaven, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world, when he sent his Son from heaven, in the bowels of his mercy, as the Orient (or day-spring) from on high, to visit us; to enlighten them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to direct our feet into the way of peace, Luke i. 78, 79. Jesus Christ then came from heaven, to be our light; to enlighten our souls, with the light of his heavenly truth: to bring us forth from the darkness of our errors and vices: to impart to us the light of faith, as a lamp to shine unto us, in this dark place of this wretched world, till the true day dawn, and day-star arise in our hearts. 2. Pet. i. 19: to give us here the light of his divine grace, for the time of our mortal pilgrimage; and to bring us hereafter to the light of glory; where in the light of God we shall see God the light, for all eternity. Embrace, my soul, this light, that comes down from heaven to visit thee: and see thou follow it in the whole conduct of thy life. O take care lest thou incur the judgment of condemnation, by the light's coming into the world, and thy loving darkness rather than the light, John iii. 19.

Consider 2dly, that Jesus Christ came down from heaven, to enlighten the world; both with his heavenly doctrine, and with his heavenly life. He came from God to be our teacher; and to open in our favour, his school of heavenly truths: truths to which the world was quite a stranger at that time, and which the children of this world, who being blinded with their passions,

passions, *love darkness more than light*, will not understand even to this day: because they will not *come to this great light*, *lest their works should be reproved by it*: *for their works are evil*, John iii: 19, 20. This *light* of Christ reproves our self-love, and all its unhappy offspring, with all our darling inclinations and affections; it confutes all the maxims of flesh and blood; and all the errors we are so apt to entertain, with relation to worldly honour, interest and pleasure. It discovers to us, the emptiness and vanity, the meer nothing of all that passes away with time, and shews us that nothing is truly great, or deserves our esteem or affection, but what is eternal. This *light* of Christ teaches us, to know both God, and ourselves: it teaches us all virtues; poverty of spirit, humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, penance, conformity to the will of God, and divine charity: it shews us the way to all perfection, and to a happy eternity: it conducts us to God himself, and to *the light of life*, that is with him.

Consider gelly, that in order to come *at the light of life*, we must *follow Christ*, not only by believing his doctrine, but by walking in his footsteps, and by an imitation of his virtues. ‘We must imitate his life and manners,’ says a holy man, ‘if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart: let it then be our chiefest study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.’ *A. Kempis*, L. i. C. 1. Yes, Christians, by often meditating on the life of Christ, we shall learn how we ought to behave on all occasions: the bright *light* of his virtues will shew us the way, in which we are to walk: it will shew us, what we are to avoid, and from what we are to fly; as well as what we are to embrace, and what we are to follow, on every occasion. *He is the way, the truth, and the life*, St. John xiv. 6. The *light* of his *life* shining on us, by the means of daily meditation, will conduct us into this *way*; will guide us to this *truth*, and will bring us safe to this *life*; even to the *very fountain's head* of eternal *life*.

Conclude

Conclude to follow, henceforward, in the practice of thy life, the heavenly light, both of the doctrine, and of the example of Jesus Christ. Walk after him, and his light; and thou shalt neither walk in darkness here, nor go into darkness hereafter. This following, the light of Christ will bring thee to the happy society of the *children of light*, in the region of *light* everlasting.

Nov. 8. *One thing is necessary.* Luke x. 42.

CONSIDER first, O my soul, and open thy eyes to the great light of this divine sentence of thy Saviour: *One thing is necessary.* It will be of infinite service to thee, to dispel the darkness and mists that encompass thee on all sides; and to direct all thy steps to the sovereign truth, thy sovereign good. Alas! what a multiplicity of cares, and concerns, about empty vanities, and worldly toys, is apt to take up our whole mind, and heart. How busy are we, all the day long, in catching flies! What a variety of amusements distract our thoughts! In what a dissipation do we generally live! How little is there of God, in our daily conversation! How few of our words, or actions are referred to him! Oh! it is too true, that we let every thing else take place, of that *only business*, for which we came into this world! And yet all this other variety, and multiplicity, which employs all our thoughts, words, and actions, is just nothing at all to our purpose: whereas upon that *one business*, our *all* depends for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, what this *one thing necessary* is, that is here recommended by our Lord? Doubtless, it is nothing else, but the dedicating ourselves to the love, and service of our God; in order to the securing the eternal salvation of our souls. O! *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but the loving of God, and the serving him alone.* Kempis. Yes, my soul, that is our *only business*; that is the *business*, for which alone we came into this world; nothing else deserves to be called *our business*:

business: whatever our employment, or calling, be in the world, it must ever be subordinate to this great *business*: all our thoughts, words, and deeds should ever tend to God, and to our eternal salvation. Whatever takes us off from attending to this great *business*, is hurtful, it is pernicious to us: whatever has no tendency to this *one thing necessary*, is all quite idle and vain. *O what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Matt. xvi. 26.

Consider 3dly, those words of our Saviour, Matt. vi. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* This *kingdom of God*, which we are here commanded to seek, in the first place, is the *kingdom of grace* in our souls; it is the *kingdom of divine love*. *This kingdom of God is within us*, Luke xvii. 21. It must be established in our own interiour. This *justice of God*, is that by which he makes us *just indeed*, through the merits of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ the just: it is the *charity of God*, which is *poured abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us*, Rom. v. 5. This *kingdom of divine love*; this *justice*, and *charity* of God in our Souls, we must continually aspire to: this must be the first and greatest object of our longing desires: this we must seek with all our power: for this we must always pray, with all the fervour of our heart. And as to all things else, as far as they are proper, or necessary for us: our heavenly Father will not fail to furnish us with *them*. We have his divine word engaged for it.

Conclude to follow, in the practice of thy life, these divine lessons of light and truth: by considering henceforward the love and service of thy God, and the salvation of thy soul, as thy *only business*; and all other concerns, comparatively with this, as nothing to thee. *O take care of this one thing necessary: and all will be well with thee, both for time and eternity.*

Nov. 9. Strive to enter by the narrow gate, Luke xiii. 24.

CONSIDER first, how the light of Christ in the gospel, represents to us the *broad road* of the world as infinitely dangerous to our souls, and as directly leading to the *wide gate* of eternal damnation. *Enter ye in at the narrow gate*, saith he, *Matt. vii. 13, 14. for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who go in thereat. O how narrow is the gate, and how strait is the way, that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!* Here we see, there are two ways, in which men walk in this life; and two gates, out of this life into eternity. One of these ways is *broad* and spacious; agreeable to the world, and to the flesh, and crowded with great multitudes of slaves to the world, and to the flesh; whom it conducts down the hill to a *wide gate*; by which they no sooner enter, but they suddenly slip down a precipice, into the bottomless pit of a miserable eternity. The other way is *strait* and *narrow*, rough and craggy, by reason of the restraint it puts upon the liberties and passions of worldlings; and its disagreeableness to the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood; and therefore few, in comparison, care to walk in it: but these few, by the favour of heaven, walk on carefully towards the *gate of life*, assisted and comforted by Jesus Christ, whom they follow; and with him, and by him are happily introduced by this *narrow gate*, into the most spacious and most beautiful regions of never ending bliss. See my soul, which of these two ways, thou art disposed to choose: and make that choice now, which thou shalt be glad, or wish to have made, for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, what it is that engages such numbers of Christians, to walk on, with so little concern, in the *broad road*, that leads to destruction; in spite of this solemn declaration of the Gospel, and of the light of their faith. *O!* it is their want of thinking: it is their wilfully shutting their eyes against the light, and so running blindfold to the precipice: it is in the language of the wise man (*Wisdom vi. 12.*) their being quite bewitched

witched, with worldly toys, and cheating vanities, it is a downright folly and madness, which they shall loudly condemn in hell, for all eternity. Alas, how unhappy are they! How wretchedly blind indeed to profess themselves Christians; that is, followers of Christ; and yet to believe, and follow the maxims of the world, rather than the maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to obey the laws of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil, their mortal enemies: rather than the ordinances of their Saviour; to prefer lies, deceit and empty vanity, before truth; darkness before light; slavery before liberty; misery before happiness; hell before heaven; and Satan before God; My soul, see thou never make so wretched a choice. Let not the world, the flesh and the devil, drag thee along with them in the broad road of perdition: it would be a sad thing to go to hell, for company sake. O choose the narrow way of self-denial, and true devotion, in the company of Christ and his Saints; and thou shalt live with them for ever.

Consider 3dly, that frightful sentence, repeated more than once, by our Lord, in the Gospel; *many are called, but few are chosen*: for it has a very close connexion with what he has said above, of the *broad road*, that leads to eternal woe, and the *narrow way*, that leads to everlasting life. Yes, Christians, *many are called, but few are chosen*; because the far greater part of mortals, are fond of the broad road, which gratifies their passions, and corrupt inclinations; and prefer the *high-way* of the world; the way of self-love; the way of *the lust of the flesh, of the lust of the eyes, and of the pride of life*; before the *narrow way* of self-denial, and of the love of God; which is less agreeable to flesh and blood. God, on his part, is infinitely good and merciful: he desires that *all should be saved*; and *should come to the knowledge of the truth*; and his Son Christ Jesus gave himself a *redemption for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 4, 6. If then but few are chosen, it cannot be for want of good-will in God; but for want of a correspondence, on the part of man. It is for want of a compliance with the necessary conditions of salvation; the chiefest of which is the keeping

the divine commandments. In a word, it is because men choose rather to walk in the *broad* road, than in the *narrow*: which in fact is choosing hell before heaven. So that the reason why they are not *chosen*, is because they have no real mind to be *chosen*.

Conclude to keep off, in the practice of thy life, from the broad road of the children of this world, and to walk in the narrow way of the children of light, by living always in the fear of God, and keeping his commandments; and thou shalt not fail of being of the number of *the chosen*.

Nov. 10. *No man can serve two masters*, Matt. vi. 24.

CONSIDER first, this great principle of Christian morality, laid down by our Lord in the Gospel, *no man can serve two masters*: by which he gives us to understand, that there is no such thing as serving him, and saving our souls; and at the same time serving the world, the flesh, or the devil. For these are enemies to God, and claim a service of us, which our great master absolutely disallows: so that we cannot please them, without displeasing him; nor be friends to them, without being enemies to him. Christians, we have all manner of obligations to serve our God; he is our only true *master*: he is our first beginning, and our last end; he is our creator, and our redeemer; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us; he is the source of our very being, and of all our good: we came into the world for nothing else but to serve him: to his service we were solemnly dedicated, when we were first made Christians: the serving him is to make us happy, both in time and eternity. But what pretensions can the world, the flesh, or the devil, have to our service? Or what obligations have we to them? They are all of them mortal enemies to our true welfare, and to the eternal salvation of our souls: if we serve them, they will make us miserable for ever. O let us then never be so wretched, so mad, so wicked, as to put them in competition with God; or to withdraw any part of our service from our God, (to whom it is all due) to bestow

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it upon these traitors, and rebels, who are enemies to all that is good.

Consider 2dly, the particular application, which our Lord makes of this principle, to warn us against the love, and service of mammon, that is, of worldly riches, of filthy lucre, of money, and of all the other perishable goods, as we call them, of this deluded and deluding world: *you cannot serve*, faith he, both *God and mammon*. No man has any inclination to serve the devil, for his own sake; or out of any love that he can have for this filthy monster: but this wicked enemy makes use of the mammon of the world, and of the allurements of the flesh, as baits, to draw poor unthinking souls to him; and to engage them in his slavery, for the sake of these perishable toys, which he paints out to them as if they were solid goods; so as to fix their affections upon them, to the prejudice of the love and service of their Maker. Therefore both here, and in many other places of holy writ, we are warned against these baits of Satan, and especially against the love and service of this *mammon of iniquity*, as inconsistent with the love and service of God, and destructive of the salvation of our souls: because it is setting up an idol, in opposition to the living God; and loving and serving the creature, instead of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. Dear Lord, preserve us from being ever guilty of any such treason!

Consider 3dly, that as we cannot serve both God and mammon; so we cannot serve both God, and pleasure; we cannot serve both God and pride; we cannot serve both God, and our impure affections; or our unhappy self-love; which is the source of all our evils. And so in general, with regard to every thing else, the love of which takes us off from the love and service of the living God, it always holds good, that we cannot serve both the creator and the creature. Our God is a *jealous* lover: he will allow of no love, but what is quite regular and orderly; and kept in subjection to the love of him. He declares against *a divided heart*; *Osea x. 2. Their heart is divided*, saith he, *now they*

shall perish. He claims the whole heart, as his own due. He will allow of no rival there. He expects to reign there without a partner. See, my soul, upon what conditions God will accept of thee. Thou must be wholly his, without reserve: or he will not receive thee. In the offering thou makest of thyself to his divine service, thou must take care, not to keep back, by fraud, any part, like Ananias and Saphira; *Acts v.* lest thou fall under the like judgment, as they did!

Conclude to admit of no other master of thy heart and affection, but the God that made thy heart for himself, and all things else for thee. None but he can fill thy heart: all other things are just nothing at all, when compared with him. Fear him alone: love him alone: give thy whole self to him alone: thus shalt thou be wholly his; and he wholly thine, for all eternity.

Nov. 11. *He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple,* Luke xiv. 33.

CONSIDER first, that every Christian, as such, ought to be a *disciple* of Jesus Christ: the very name of *Christian* implies as much; and the first Christians were originally known and distinguished, by no other name, than that of *disciples*, that is, of scholars and followers of this heavenly master. See then, my soul, what the Character of a *Christian* obliges thee to, by the declaration of the Son of God himself. If thou wilt be a *disciple* of Christ, if thou wilt be a *Christian* indeed, and to the purpose, of securing to thyself that happy eternity, with the living God, that is prepared for Christ's *true disciples*; thou must renounce all things else, how near, or dear soever they may be to thee, to follow him. Thou must renounce them, if not in effect, at least in affection; by taking off thy heart from them, and transferring it to thy only sovereign good: and thou must renounce them in effect too; as often, and as far, as they stand in thy way, so as to hinder thee from following Christ. This is the great and fundamental lesson of practical Christianity; this is the abridgment of the Gospel: to give up all, that thou mayst

mayst find all; to be disengaged from the creature, that thou mayst be united to the Creator.

Consider 2dly, that our Lord explains this obligation of our renouncing all things else, in order to be his disciples, by two comparisons: the one of a man, who purposes to build a tower, but first sits down to reckon up the charges, to see if he has wherewithal to finish the work: the other of a king, who is going to wage war against another king; but first considers, whether he has sufficient forces to encounter his adversary. Every Christian is highly concerned in these two comparisons: inasmuch as every Christian, if he desires to be happy for ever, must raise a spiritual building here, upon the foundation, which is Christ; a building that may be proof against all storms and inundations; a *tower* that may stand for ever: and every Christian is engaged in a warfare, against the prince of darkness, and all his allies; wherein, if he does not come off with victory, he must be miserable for all eternity. Therefore the Christian must sit down, and must reckon up the necessary charges of this building; to see, that he may be able to finish it: and he must take care to secure to himself sufficient forces to enable him to carry on this war, and to subdue the enemy. Now it is by renouncing all things else to follow Christ, that we are associated to him, and made partakers of all his treasures; and we exchange our weakness for his strength: and thus we are enabled both to elevate our building, even to heaven; and to overthrow all the powers of hell.

Consider 3dly, how true it is, that our affection to the things of this world, are indeed the chiefest hindrance to us; as well in carrying on our spiritual building; as in our conflicts with our spiritual enemies. The builder will make no progress in his building, if instead of applying himself seriously to the work he has undertaken, he loses his time in amusing himself, about other things, nothing to his purpose; or if he takes little or no care to procure the necessary materials; or suffers his hands and feet to be shackled, when he should

should be at work. It is the case of all such Christians, as have not yet mortified their affections to the things of the world. These alas! take up their thoughts; these employ their time; what should be expended in carrying on the great building, is all wasted upon these; and the builder lies groveling upon the earth, tied down with the chains of his misplaced affections. And as for the wrestling, in which we are engaged, with the spirits of wickedness: it is no less certain, that nothing gives them a greater hold on us, than our unmortified affections to these worldly toys. It is like carrying a load of cloaths about us, when we are to wrestle with one that is stript; who will be sure, by that occasion, to have the advantage of us. Therefore we who are to wrestle with the devil, who is naked, must fling off our garments, saith St. Gregory (*Homil. 32.*) by renouncing our worldly affections, or we shall be sure to be brought down by him.

Conclude to make it thy perpetual study, to take off thy affections from all things of the earth; and to disregard the creature, that thou mayest find the Creator. And seeing that a great grace is required to this; which may untie the soul from all that is not God; and carry her up upon the wings of the dove, to rest eternally in him: continually pray for his grace.

Nov. 12. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,* Mat. xvi. 24.

CONSIDER first, that the disciple of Jesus Christ, by the rule of the Gospel, is not only obliged to renounce, (at least in affection) all things else, for the sake of his master: but, what is the hardest of all, he must also *renounce and deny himself*. And this his renouncing of himself, is absolutely insisted upon, by our Lord, as the first, the most essential, and the most indispensable condition, for every one, that would *come after him*, and belong to him. Yes, Christians, there is that irreconcileable opposition between this *self*, strangely corrupted by sin, surrounded with darkness, and bent upon evil; and the purity and sanctity of Jesus Christ,

Christ, and the bright light of his truth: that there is no coming, in a proper manner, at the one, without renouncing the other: there is no coming at divine charity, which teaches us to love our God with our whole heart, (the principal of all Christian duties) without declaring an eternal war with *self-love*, the capital enemy to the love of God, and the parent of all vices. And therefore we are not only commanded, in the Gospel, to *renounce*, and to *deny* ourselves, in order to follow Christ, but also to *hate* ourselves, or as it is expressed in the original (*Luke* xiv. 26, and *John* xii. 25.) *to hate our souls* in this world, in order to save them in the next. See my soul, upon what conditions thou art to be a disciple of the Son of God; thou must not only renounce all things else; thou must also renounce, and hate thyself too.

Consider 2dly, the grounds upon which is founded this strict obligation of *denying*, and of renouncing ourselves in this world: namely, that we may be in a proper condition to give ourselves up entirely to God; and thus leaving ourselves, may find him, and be eternally his. So that in effect, this denying and renouncing ourselves, is the best way we can have of *loving* ourselves; because it procures us the greatest good, and brings us to our sovereign good. As on the other hand, that unhappy self-seeking, and loving to gratify ourselves, in this world, is indeed *hating* ourselves: because of the mischiefs it brings upon us, both for time and eternity. If then we are to renounce the affections to all things else, in order to follow Christ: lest the love of them, should divide our heart, and take it off from him: how much more are we to renounce *self-love*, for the love of him; as being much stronger than all our other affections; and far more apt to captivate our heart, and to shut out the love of God. Yes my soul, thy self-love is indeed the greatest enemy both of thy God, and of thy own true, and everlasting welfare, and therefore thou must not only renounce it, but abhor it too, with a most perfect hatred; and turn all thy forces against it, in order to abolish it, and destroy it.

Consider

Consider 3dly, and attend to the sentiments of a great servant of God, upon this subject. ‘ My son thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own. Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than any thing in the world,—Thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself. All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters, full of desires, full of cares, unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand: for all shall come to nothing, that proceeds not from God. Take this short and perfect word: *For-sake all, and thou shalt find all: leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest.* Consider this well, and when thou shalt have put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things.’ Following of Christ, L. iii. C. 27 and 32. And again. ‘ Son, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much shalt thou be able to enter into me. As the desiring of nothing abroad, brings peace at home, so the relinquishing thyself interiourly, joins thee to God. I will have thee learn the perfect renouncing of thyself, in my will, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*—If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself.’ C. 56. My soul, let these be thy sentiments also; and strive to conform thy practice to them.

Conclude to give up both thyself, and all things else to follow Christ; and by following him, to come at thy sovereign good; and to enjoy him for all eternity. If thou wast to give ten thousand worlds, to purchase such a treasure; all that thou shouldst give, would fall infinitely short of the value of it.

Nov. 13. *Except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,* Mat. v. 20.

CONSIDER first, how much it concerns us all, to know what we must do to save our souls; and what kind

kind of justice, that is, what degree of virtue, is necessary to bring us to heaven: lest we deceive ourselves, or let ourselves be imposed upon, by the enemy, with false appearances, and outward shew; and catching at the shadow of virtue, lose the substance of it, and our souls into the bargain. The Scribes and Pharisees were the most precise amongst the Jews; and professed the greatest zeal for the law of God, and the true religion; they prayed much; they gave large alms; and they fasted frequently; so that they passed for Saints amongst the people: and yet we are here assured, by the mouth of truth itself, that except our virtue exceed theirs, we shall have no share in his heavenly kingdom. See then, my soul, and examine well in what their justice was defective; that so thou mayest avoid their defects; lest thou perish with them: for why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be deluded, to the loss both of thy God, and of thyself, for all eternity?

Consider 2dly, that the *justice* of the Scribes, and of the Pharisees, was many ways deficient; but more especially in this, that it contented itself, with reforming, and regulating the outside; whilst it neglected the interiour, which is the true seat of Christian justice. They *made clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, whilst their inside was full of iniquity.* Luke xi. 39. Their good works were not done, with a pure intention; they sought not God, but themselves, in all they did: their prayers, their alms, their fastings, were directed to the gaining the applause of the world; to the end they might be honoured and esteemed *by men.* And whilst they avoided the more scandalous excesses, of the grosser carnal sins of drunkenness and impurity, which might have rendered them infamous in the eyes of the world: they made no scruple of the spiritual sins (much more odious to God) of envy, hatred, detraction, covetousness, and an extravagant pride, and conceit of themselves, joined with a contempt of all others. Thus all the good they seemed to do was quite vitiated and corrupted; all their virtues were but in appearance; and before the eyes of men; but their vices

vices were real, and abominable in the sight of God. Christians, *take heed of this leaven of the Pharisees*, as your Lord admonishes you: take heed of *hypocrisy*, of ostentation, and an outward shew of devotion, destitute of the real substance of it. *All the glory of the true spouse, the daughter of the king is within*: it lies hidden in the interiour of the soul. Take heed lest pride or vain-glory vitiate your good actions, by vitiating your intention. Keep yourselves *clean*, not only from *all the defilements of the flesh*, but of *the spirit* also; for these are the more heinous sins of the two. O see that nothing of the Pharisee corrupt the Christian in you.

Consider 3dly, what that *justice* is, which Jesus Christ insists upon, as necessary to the eternal salvation of our souls. It consists not in meer outward professions: for *not every one that faith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*; but *he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven*. Matt. vii. 12: nor will *faith alone* suffice to Christian justice, James ii. 17, 24. Nor will alms, prayers or fastings alone, make any one *just* (as we see in the very case of the Pharisees) nor any outward form of worship, without the inward spirit; nor any thing else, that can be separated from obedience to the commandments, from true Christian humility, and divine charity. No, my soul, the justice, that is to bring thee to heaven, is *to keep the commandments*. Matt. xix. 17. It is *to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven*, Matt. vii. 21. It is to be *poor in spirit*; Matt. v. 3. It is to be *humble, like a little child*, Matt. xviii. 3, 4. It is *to love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength: and to love thy neighbour as thyself*, This is Christian justice indeed? *Do this and thou shalt live*. But where any part of this is wanting, nothing else can make any man *just*.

Conclude to be quite in earnest, in seeking and following after this Christian *justice* in all its branches; by purity of intention in all thy works; by sincerity and simplicity, or uprightness of soul; by attending to thy

thy interieur, to keep that regular and orderly; by true humility of heart; and above all things, by flying sin, and loving God: and thou shall be just indeed before the Lord, and entitled to his heavenly kingdom.

Nov. 14. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure,*
&c. Matt. xiii. 44.

CONSIDER first, that by *the kingdom of heaven*¹ in this, and many other places in the gospel, we are to understand that *heavenly kingdom*, by which God reigns, by his grace, in our souls. *A heavenly kingdom* indeed, which we are commanded to *seek in the first place*; Matt. vi. 33. and which we are taught daily to pray for, in the second petition of the Lord's prayer. Now this *kingdom of grace* in our souls is here likened to *a treasure*; because of its inestimable value: it is worth more than all the kingdoms of the earth: it brings God himself into our souls, to live and reign for ever there. But then it is a *hidden treasure*, because the children of this world are strangers to the true value of it: and though they have heard of the field (of virtue and devotion) where it is to be found, by seeking, and by digging for it; they are far more fond of the childish toys, which amuse them at present, than of a treasure unseen; and therefore they are unwilling to be either at the charges of purchasing this field; or at the pains of digging for this treasure. Not so the man in the gospel, who having discovered this treasure, sets his whole heart upon it, *hides it diligently, and for the joy thereof, goes and sells all he has, and buys that field.* See, my soul, if this be thy disposition? Dost thou consider this kingdom of divine grace, as a *treasure* indeed, and the richest of all treasures? Is thy heart set upon it? *For where thy treasure is, there thy heart will be.* Art thou willing to purchase, at any rate, that blessed field, where this treasure lies?

Consider 2dly, the lessons we are taught, by our Lord, in this parable: particularly with regard to the value, we ought to set upon divine grace; and the great esteem and affection, we ought to have for our spiritual

advancement; and for all such things as may help our souls forward, and bring them nearer to our God. We are here also taught, that the Christian, who desires to secure to himself this heavenly *treasure*, which he has begun to discover, must not make a *shew* of it, by ostentation or vain glory; which would be the direct way to lose it: but must *hide* it, by humility; like a traveller, who carrying a *treasure* about him, endeavours to conceal it, for fear of robbers. Moreover we are taught, that to make this *treasure* our own, we must purchase the *field*, where it lies; and that this purchase will cost us all we are worth. This *field*, in which this spiritual *treasure* is concealed, is true wisdom; it is a devout and virtuous life; it is the following of Christ in good earnest, and being his *true disciples*. Now to purchase a *field*, of so great a value as this is, we must part with all things else; that is, we must give up all other affections, to embrace and follow Christ: but then in exchange he on his part will make over to us all his treasures, and himself into the bargain.

Consider 3dly, Christian souls, if you desire to have a share in so great a happiness, by what steps you are to advance towards it, and to come to the possession of it. And first you must be convinced, by the word of God, and by the light of faith, that there is a *treasure* of inestimable value, designed by your heavenly Father for you, to enrich you, both for time and eternity; if you will but make use of the proper means to find it out, and to make it your own. The next step must be, to conceive a great esteem for this heavenly *treasure*; an ardent desire to acquire it; and a strong resolution to spare neither pains, nor costs, in the acquisition of it. This desire and resolution must be followed, by a diligent enquiry, after the *field*, of wisdom and virtue, where this *treasure* is hidden; and then digging there, till it is found. Now all this is to be effected by the exercise of consideration, and mental prayer. Yes, my soul, it is by daily opening thy eyes to the light of God, and to his divine truths, in meditation, that thou shalt both learn what a *treasure* there is in virtue; and how thou

art

art to be put in possession of it. Here thou shalt discover the beauty of holiness; how sweet it is to love God; and how happy to serve him in good earnest: here thou shalt be inflamed with a fervent desire of procuring for thyself so great a happiness; and with a holy *hunger and thirst* after it. The pondering well, by deep consideration, eternal truths, is like digging for the treasure of the kingdom of heaven; and the affections and resolutions of the soul, by which she is determined at all events to consecrate the remainder of her life to divine love, is like selling all to purchase the field, where this treasure is deposited.

Conclude to use thy best endeavours, to seek without ceasing for this treasure of the kingdom of heaven, in the field of virtue and devotion; and to dig daily for it, by the daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer, and thou shalt not fail to find it.

Nov. 15. *On the parable of the marriage feast*, Mat. xxii.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord here likens *the kingdom of heaven*, (that is, his spiritual kingdom, which he came down from *heaven* to establish: and which is to bring our souls to *heaven*) to a marriage feast, which a great king makes for the wedding of his son. To this feast many are invited, who refuse to come: many take no notice of the invitation, but go their ways, one to his farm, another to his traffick: many afflict; and persecute even to death, the messengers that are sent to call them to the wedding. All these then are rejected and condemned: and in their place, the poor, the blind and the lame, are gathered together, from the highways and from the hedges, and are brought in to be guests at this royal feast. But the man who presumed to come in without having on a wedding garment, is ordered to be bound hand and foot, and to be cast out into the exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So far the parable: now let us see how it is to be applied; and what sacred truths we are to learn from it?

The Son of God came down from heaven, to wed to himself our human nature, by the mystery of his incarnation; and every one of our souls in particular, by a happy union of grace and love. This is that wedding, which the great King of heaven and earth makes for his only Son. The marriage feast, with which this wedding is celebrated, is begun here upon earth by grace, in the souls of as many as sincerely come to Christ, with faith and love; and shall be perpetual hereafter, by the eternal enjoyment of him in his heavenly paradise. To this marriage feast both Jews and Gentiles, were long ago invited, by the apostles; and other messengers of God: and all nations are still invited to the same, as well by apostolick preachers, sent amongst them, for their conversion; as by many other ways, by which God daily calls souls to his love and service, in order to their salvation: Happy they who duly correspond with these heavenly calls; and readily come to this feast, to which they are so lovingly invited by so great a King! But then they must take care to come with the proper dispositions, signified by the wedding garment: without which they must not expect any part with the bridegroom in his everlasting banquet.

Consider 2dly, the infinite goodness of God, manifested to us in this parable, by his inviting us all to this heavenly feast: considering what this feast is, what kind of entertainment he has here prepared for us: and how very wretched, and undeserving we are of any such favour. But O the strange stupidity of so many poor thoughtless mortals, who daily slight and neglect this divine invitation! O how blind, how miserable, how wicked are they to prefer these worldly toys, this farm, this traffick, these empty airy bubbles; before this divine banquet; where God desires to feast their souls with himself; by the sweet blessings and communications, of his graces here; and by *inebriating* them hereafter, for all eternity, *with the plenty of his house, and making them drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life.*

Consider

Consider gdly, the dreadful consequences of neglecting, or rejecting these heavenly invitations, by which we are called to the *marriage feast of the Lamb*. Alas! our all is here at stake: our whole happiness, for time and eternity, absolutely depends upon our coming to this feast. We shall be perpetually miserable, if we are excluded from it. And shall we be so wretched, as wilfully to exclude ourselves, by refusing to come, when we are so pressingly invited, by the King of heaven? Will he not highly resent this contemptuous treatment; this flighting of his gracious calls; this preferring the vanities and lying fooleries of the world, before him and his banquet? O there is nothing moves him more to indignation! It is this crying sin is the principal cause of the reprobation of all that are lost. And therefore our Lord concludes this parable, with that terrible sentence, that *many are called but few are chosen*; to excite us to a diligence, and fervour in corresponding with grace; and to convince us, that if we are not of the number of the elect, the fault is entirely our own, in not answering the calls of heaven; but preferring mere baubles, even the idols of our passions, before that marriage feast, to which he so graciously invites us.

Conclude, O my soul, to secure at least thy own eternal welfare, by a ready compliance with all the gracious calls of heaven; and by being quite serious and in earnest, in hastening to this feast of grace, to which thou art invited. But remember to take along with thee the *wedding garment* of divine love, with a happy and holy resolution, and determination, of dedicating and consecrating what remains of thy life to thy God; of flying all known and wilful sin, more than any other evil whatsoever; of being faithful until death; and of labouring to advance every day more than other in the way of God and of true life. With this wedding garment, thou wilt be both a welcome, and an eternal guest: without it, thou wilt be sentenced to be cast out into the exterior darkness.

Nov. 16. *On the parable of the barren fig-tree, Luke xiii.*

CONSIDER first, that all Christians are like trees, planted in the vineyard of Christ: and that he expects of them all, that they should bring forth fruit, each one in his kind. He will not be content with their making a fair shew with beautiful leaves: nor yet with their bringing forth a meaner sort of fruit, unworthy of his vineyard: but he requires that they should bring forth *good fruit*, and declares (*Matt. vii. 19.*) *that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.* This sentence then stands against all such trees as are barren, in our Lord's vineyard: yes the axe is already laid at the root of them all. (*Matt. iii. 10.*) However, as we see, in the parable of the fig-tree, God in his great patience and mercy, bears with them, for a while, and suspends the execution of the sentence; in hopes of their coming in time to bring forth good fruit: till after repeated disappointments, he lets the sentence take place; and suddenly cuts them down, to be the fuel of a fire, that shall never be extinguished. See here, my soul, and dread the sad consequences of continuing to be a barren tree, in the vineyard of our Lord; and of *despising the riches of his goodness, and his patience, and long-suffering*, with which he waits so long, in hopes of *good fruit*.

Consider 2dly, as to thy own particular, how much thou owest to God, for having planted thee in his vineyard; and for all that he has done for thee, that thou mightest be fruitful. O how often has he visited thee, during all these past years, with the dew of heaven, and with the wholesome showers of his divine graces? What dressing, and manuring has he not daily bestowed upon thee! How early a knowledge has he given thee of himself, how often hast thou been favoured with his heavenly word; by which his divine will has been notified to thee? How often hast thou been admitted to his sacraments, the fountains of grace and life? These are

are great advantages indeed: these have made many trees very fruitful; these have made many great Saints. But what fruits have they produced in thee? How hast thou corresponded with all these visits and favours of heaven? Hast thou hitherto brought forth *good fruit, or bad fruit?* Hast thou not at the best, contented thyself, with the leaves of some outward performances, like those of the Scribes and Pharisees, that might please the eyes of the world; without bearing any real fruits of solid Christian virtue? If so, remember what a sentence stands at present against thee; and prevent the execution of it, by a speedy and hearty repentance, and conversion to God; and by beginning at least to bring forth the good fruit of a new life, before the time of thy reprieve expire, the term of which is unknown to thee, and may be very near at hand.

Consider 3dly, that the fruit, which God expects from thee, is not merely, that thou shouldst refrain from scandalous excesses; or that thou shouldst lead a moral honest life, as many pagans have done; or that thou shouldst frequent the publick worship of the church; or any other external duties; which may be liable to be ill performed, for want of a pure intention; or corrupted with pride and self-love: but the fruits which God calls for, and insists upon, are such as are solid, and found at heart; such as are never to be found in hypocrites, or impostors, or any others but truly good Christians. Such are an unfeigned humility, and contempt of ourselves; the mortification of our own will, of our passions, and corrupt inclinations, by the virtues of obedience, and self-denial; a conformity in all things with the holy will of God; sincere piety and devotion, and above all things, true and perfect charity; by loving God, with our whole hearts; and every neighbour, whether friend, or enemy, in him, and for him. These are *good fruits* indeed: and the trees that bring forth such fruits as these, are *good trees*. But where these fruits are wanting, and either pride, or passion, or self-love still prevails; neither alms, nor fastings, nor long prayers, nor daily frequenting the sacraments, nor speak-

speaking with the tongues of men and angels, nor prophesying, nor working miracles, nor even raising the dead to life, will secure any tree from the dreadful judgment of being cut down, and cast into the fire.

Conclude to look well to thyself, and examine what kind of fruits thine are: whether good and sound, and fit to be presented to the Lord of the vineyard; or at the best but wild, and sour, or rotten at heart, by the corruption of thy pride and self-conceit: and take care to purge away whilst thou hast time, whatever either hinders the fruit from ripening, or rots and corrupts it. Thy eternal welfare absolutely depends upon thy bringing forth a store of *good fruit*; upon which thou mayest live for ever.

Nov. 17. *On the parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv.*

CONSIDER first, in the *prodigal son*, a lively image of the misery of every poor sinner, who by wilful sin, goes away from his Father's house, into a *far country*, even the region of death: and there wastes all his substance, by living riotously; that is, loses, and squanders away all the graces, he had received from God; and abuses all his gifts and talents, by making them all subservient to his criminal passions and lusts. *Alas!* how soon does he experience the *famine*, that reigns in that country? A *mighty famine* indeed! A dismal want of the bread of life, and of all true nourishment: a perpetual emptiness of the soul: a hunger and thirst, that is never to be satisfied. For all that is brought to market there, though sold at a very dear rate, is but mere wind, froth, and bubbles, that can never fill the belly. In vain does the poor wretch, under this famine, sell himself for a slave to one of the citizens of that region, even to *Satan*, the ruler of that land of darkness, who sets him to feed his swine, *viz.* his own brutish passions, and carnal inclinations: for he finds himself still perishing, for hunger and want: he is not allowed to fill himself, even with the husks which the swine eat; they leave him still empty. *Ah!* sinners see the dismal state you reduce yourselves to, when

when you turn your back upon your father, and choose rather to be slaves of the devil than children of God. O never expect any solid satisfaction; or so much as one happy hour, till you return home again to your father's house!

Consider 2dly, the steps by which the *prodigal child* was reclaimed, and brought home to his father; and thou shalt find that the beginning of his conversion, was his *returning to himself*, and being made sensible of his great misery. Alas! the poor deluded soul, at the same time that she leaves her father's house, by forgetting her God; leaves also, and forgets herself; and is so strangely blinded, and bewitched by the world, the flesh, and the devil; as to imagine herself free, under the worst of slaveries; rich under the extremity of want; and honourable and happy in the very midst of disgrace, confusion, and perpetual uneasiness. But when she begins to open her inward eyes to the light of God, by serious consideration; and to *return into herself*; she is greatly alarmed at the sight of her present wretched condition, and the dreadful dangers, that surround her on all sides; and threaten her continually with nothing less than a miserable eternity. Now a ready correspondence with this heavenly light and grace, by a desire to return to the best of fathers, is the first step to the prodigal's conversion. But then see, my soul, how he rises up immediately, without the least delay, to follow this call. See with what dispositions of a most profound humility, with what a sense of his own unworthiness, with what a deep sorrow, and contrition for his sins, he makes the best of his way home. O give ear to his sentiments on this occasion. *I will arise*, saith he, *and I will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* O that all sinners, who have imitated the *prodigal*, in his extravagancies; would imitate him also, by *returning to themselves*, as he did, and by *rising without delay*, to go, and to seek the true father of their souls, with the like dispositions of a *contrite and humble heart!*

Consider

Consider 3dly, the infinite goodness and mercy of God, expressed to us in the manner, in which this heavenly father received the prodigal child returning to him. He did not stay till he came to his house: but when he was yet a great way off he saw him, and was moved with compassion; and running to him, he fell upon his neck, and kissed him: he scarce gave him time to confess his guilt, before he ordered his servants to bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and to bring the fatted calf and kill it: and let us eat, said he, and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life, he was lost, and is found. O blessed be this infinite goodness, and mercy for ever, which daily exerts itself in this manner; and works the like wonders in favour of penitent sinners; He first excites them, to desire to come home to him: he has pity on them, when as yet they are a great way off; he runs out to meet them; he lovingly receives them into his embraces; he cloaths them again with the sacred robe of his divine grace; he restores them to the honour and dignity of his children; and to all the ornaments of virtue and grace, which they had forfeited by sin; he admits them to the divine banquet of the body and blood of his only Son; and causes all his heavenly court to celebrate a feast of joy upon their conversion. And shall not all this loving kindness, this tender mercy, these extraordinary favours shewn to penitent sinners, encourage thee, my soul, and effectually determine thee to quit for good and all the husks of swine, and to run to the embraces of this Father of mercies?

Conclude, if thy case be like that of the prodigal, in being in a far country, away from thy father's house; that is, at a great distance from thy God, by mortal sin; perishing for hunger and want, among the husks of swine; to determine to imitate the prodigal, in his ready correspondence with grace; in the resolution with which he presently rises, and returns to his father; and in the dispositions of humility, and contrition, with which he returns: and this great Father will undoubtedly

edly receive thee, as he did him ; and all his heavenly family will feast and rejoice at thy conversion.

NCV. 18. *On the parable of the unjust steward,*
Luke xvi.

CONSIDER first, that this steward, being accused to his Lord, of having wasted his substance, was called upon by him to give up an account of his stewardship, for that he could now be steward no longer : and therefore he sought to provide for himself, by making friends amongst his master's debtors, by discounting a considerable part of what they stood charged in their bills to his master ; that so they might be willing to receive him into their houses, and to entertain him. In which, though he acted iniquitously with regard to his master, he did wisely, according to what the world calls wisdom, with regard to the providing for himself, against the evil day : *for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you,* saith our Lord, *make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.* See here Christians the great lesson designed for you in this parable. Your having so often wasted the goods of your great master, ought to give you a just apprehension, of your being quickly called by him to an account ; and deprived of your stewardship. What then must you do, in order to your future support, and everlasting livelihood ? O you must make to yourselves friends, by the good use of the mammon of this world ; that is by liberal alms to God's poor servants ; you must diligently exercise charity in all its branches : you must use your best endeavours to reclaim sinners from the error of their way ; and by that means procure for them a discharge from their debts : and your Lord will commend you for having done wisely for yourselves : and these friends you have thus made for yourselves, will, through his mercy, be qualified, to receive you hereafter into his eternal mansions.

Consider

Consider 2dly, in how many respects, we are all stewards of this great Lord. All that we have is his: our very being is his: our whole soul and body; all our powers, faculties and senses; all our gifts and talents; all that we possess corporally, or spiritually; our whole time, and all our worldly substance. In regard to all these things, we are stewards of God; and accountable to him. All these are goods that belong to this great master; which he has entrusted to our administration. We are unjust stewards, if we waste any part of these goods: and the employing of any of them otherwise than according to his holy will, and his divine ordinances, will be accounted wasting them, in the eyes of him, before whom we shall one day most certainly appear, to give an account of our whole stewardship; and of all the years, we have had his goods in our hands. O who shall be able to stand this examination of accounts; upon the issue of which an eternity depends! O who shall be able to answer for one article in a thousand!

Consider 3dly, O my soul, those words in the parable, as addressed to thee this day: *Give an account of thy stewardship*: and see what thou couldst say for thyself, if this day were to be thy last; and thy accounts were to be immediately inspected. Thou knowest not the day, nor the hour: see then, what account thou couldst give, if this should be the day. For why shouldst thou expose thyself any longer to the dreadful danger of being called upon, when unprepared, to thy eternal condemnation. Alas! Has there been hitherto any part of thy life, in which thou hast acted the part of an honest and faithful steward, with relation to the goods of thy master? How little share has he had in thy thoughts, words, and actions? How little of thy time has been employed in his service? How often have all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses, both exterior and interior, been alienated from him, and made instruments of offence? How often have his choicest gifts and talents been abused and perverted? What is become of all the graces, purchased for thee by the blood

blood of Christ? Where are all the inspirations, calls and reproaches of conscience with which he has visited thee? Where the sacraments, thou hast received? The word of God; and so many other spiritual advantages; or temporal blessings, thou hast been favoured with? How few are there of all these goods of thy master, which thou hast not wasted, or perverted? He has even made over in a manner to thee, the passion and death of his only Son; and deposited all his merits with thee, in the sacred mysteries; and what little use, or advantage hast thou hitherto made of them? Ah! my poor soul, in how wretched a state indeed are all our accounts? And what have we not to apprehend, from the justice of our Lord, for having been such wicked stewards, all our life time?

Conclude, now at least to set thy accounts in order, to rectify all that has hitherto been amiss; and henceforward to begin upon a new bottom; by dedicating thy whole self, and all thou hast, to the love and service of him, to whom all belongs upon all manner of titles. It is a most crying injustice to waste his goods: how much more to employ them against himself, by wilful sin?

Nov. 19. *On the rich man, and the poor beggar, Luke xvi.*

CONSIDER first, the words of our Lord in the gospel, ' there was a certain rich man, saith he, ' who was cloathed in purple and fine linnen; and ' feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a ' certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, ' full of sores; desiring to be filled with the crumbs ' that fell from the rich man's table; and no one did ' give him: moreover the dogs came, and licked his ' sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and ' was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom. ' And the rich man also died, and he was buried in ' hell. And lifting up his eyes, when he was in tor- ' ments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his ' bosom: and he cried and said: father Abraham have
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mercy on me; and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life time; and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; nor from thence come hither, &c.' See here, my soul, a great difference in life, between the rich man, abounding in all that this world could give, and living in pleasures and delights; and the poor beggar, wanting even the necessaries of life, and languishing under a multitude of sores, and ulcers: but look, and observe how quickly the scene is changed; and what a greater, and eternal difference immediately succeeds, after death; when the one is comforted, with everlasting joy, and happiness; and the other plunged into the extremity of endless misery, where he cannot even be allowed one drop of water to cool his tongue.

Consider 2dly, what it was that brought the rich man to this place of eternal woe: since here is no mention in the gospel of any scandalous excesses, that he was guilty of; no blasphemies, no perjuries, or profane swearing; no murders; no adulteries, or other impurities; no thefts, no rapines, or extortions; no flanders, no detractions, or lies: it is only said that *he was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day*; things, in which, considering his state and condition, the world apprehends no sin. What then can we suppose to have been the occasion of his damnation? O Christians! his sins were chiefly sins of omission of the service of God: he led an idle life: he loved his pleasures more than God: he made a god of his belly: he had no concern for the poor: so that he lived in a continual breach of the two great commandments of loving God, with his whole heart; and of loving his neighbour as himself; and certainly there needs

needs no other sins to send any man to hell. See then, my soul, thou never flatter thyself with the imagination of thy being innocent; nor promise thyself any security; because thou art not guilty perhaps of the grosser sort of sins: whilst thou leadest an idle, unprofitable life; following the ways and maxims of worldlings; and loving the honours, riches, or pleasures of the world, better than God: for such a life as this can never bring any one to heaven: it is too remote from the narrow way that leads to life.

Consider 3dly, in the case of the poor beggar, the happy fruits of patient suffering; of a true conformity in all things to the will of God; and of always keeping one's self close to him, by recollection, and divine love, in every place, occupation, or condition of life. For it was thus the poverty, and the pains of Lazarus were sanctified, and made the seeds of his eternal happiness. O that all such Christians, as share in any part of his sufferings, were so wise, and happy in their comportment under them, as to reap the like fruits, for eternity, from their temporal evils! But O it is the want of a lively faith of the great truths of God, delivered to us in the scriptures; it is the want of a true sense of the goods, and evils, of eternity; it is the want of seriously thinking, and considering; is too often the bane both of the rich, and of the poor: for otherwise, as our Lord here informs us, these scripture truths ought to influence us more powerfully, towards the total change of our lives; than even if any person were to come from the dead to preach unto us.

Conclude to labour, and pray for heavenly wisdom, to conduct thee, in such manner, in the midst of the goods and evils of this transitory life; that both the one and the other may be made subservient to thy eternal happiness.

Nov. 20. *On the charitable Samaritan, Luke x.*

CONSIDER first, that our Lord, to teach us that general charity, which we owe to the whole world, without exception, or distinction, of nation, or opinion, proposes himself to us in this parable, as the perfect pattern of this charity, *In the person of a Samaritan, a people differing both in nation and religion from the Jews?* ‘A certain man,’ saith he ‘went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and fell among robbers; who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him he passed by. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place, and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion; and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil, and wine; and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said: take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee?’ See here, my soul, in this charitable Samaritan, an image of what thy Lord has done for thee: *and go thou, as he tells thee, in the application of the parable, and do in like manner;* that is, shew thou the like mercy, and charity, to thy neighbours, as Christ has shewn to thee. This will be indeed a charity, both to them; and to thyself: since it will bring thee, *to possess eternal life;* v. 25. Yes, my soul, *this do, and thou shalt live,* v. 28.

Consider 2dly, in this parable, the wretched condition, into which man was fallen by sin. Going down from *Jerusalem*, which is interpreted *the vision of peace;* to *Jericho* which signifies *the moon;* (that is, turning his back to his God, and to all true *peace*, to seek a false happiness, in the forbidden fruit, of worldly enjoyments, which are continually changing like *the moon*) he fell among robbers; that is, he fell into the hands of wicked

wicked spirits, and became their prey. He was stripped by them, of all the gifts of grace, with which he had been adorned by his Creator; and was grievously wounded in all his powers, and faculties: his understanding was darkened with ignorance and error, in his notions of good and evil; and his will perverted with malice, in the preferring evil before good: all his passions were let loose upon him, having lost the bridle of original justice; and his whole soul was in a strange disorder; weak, beyond expression, to every thing that is good, and violently bent upon evil. Thus he lay *half dead*; his better part, *viz.* the soul being dead indeed, by the loss of its true life, the grace of God; and both the soul, and the body, being condemned by divine justice to a second and eternal death: and in this state, he was like to remain, being utterly incapable of himself of making one step towards his deliverance; and so must have inevitably perished to eternity; had not this charitable Samaritan come down from heaven to his relief. O the dismal consequences of sin! O the infinite goodness of God! And shalt not thou, my soul, who hast had the experience both of the one, and of the other; from henceforth at least dread, detest, and fly, with all thy power, from that worst of evils, sin; and embrace henceforward with all thy affections this sovereign goodness of thy God?

Consider edly, by descending to particulars, what this infinite goodness has done, for lost man, in sending down his only Son to be our pious Samaritan, to deliver us from all our evils, and to impart all good to our souls. Alas! the priest, and the Levite passed us by; and left us languishing under all our wounds, and miseries. For the law, and its ministers were not able to heal, or to relieve us. But our good Samaritan had compassion on us; his tender mercies brought him down from his throne of glory, to our assistance. He has bound up our wounds, by suffering himself to be wounded for our iniquities; that by his stripes we might be healed. He has applied to our wounded souls the heavenly medicines of his sacraments, signified by the

wine and oil. He has set us upon his own beast, by *bearing our sins himself in his own body, upon the tree of the cross.* He has brought us to the blessed inn of his holy church, where all graces and means of salvation, are abundantly furnished to all that ask, and seek for them. He has given the charge of our souls to the keeper of this inn, that is, to his apostles and their successors, the pastors of this his holy church, divinely commissioned and assisted by him: and he has promised them a most ample reward, for all eternity, to repay them for the care they shall take of us? O what return shall we make to our Lord, for all this mercy, and all this love he has thus shewn to us. O he desires no other return, but that we should love him, and shew mercy to one another.

Conclude to make him this return of love: but see it be, with thy whole heart; for he will not accept of a love, that allows of any creature to stand in competition with him. See also thou never forget that there is no loving him, without a sincere disposition of shewing mercy to thy neighbours, for his sake, and by his great example.

Nov. 21. On the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER first, that the church celebrates, on this day, the early dedication, which the Blessed Virgin made of herself to God, and to his eternal love, and service; when, as we learn by a pious tradition, she was presented by her holy parents, St. Joachim, and St. Ann, in the temple of the Lord; and remained there, in the company of other Virgins, in an apartment allotted for that purpose, in one of the courts of the temple. Learn my soul, from this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, the great advantages of early piety; and the happiness of dedicating thyself, from thy childhood, to divine love; as also the duty incumbent on all parents to present their children to God; to keep them at a distance from the contagion of bad company, and from all the false maxims and corrupt ways of a wicked world; and to train them up in the fear and love of God.

God. The Blessed Virgin, was brought by divine inspiration to the house of God, where she lived remote from the noise and distractions of the world; because she was to be the house, where the Son of God himself would be incarnate, and the living temple in which he would live. Christians, do you desire that your souls should be also the house of God, and the living temples of his glory? It is by withdrawing yourselves, as much as possible, from the tumult and confusion of the world: it is by continually presenting yourselves to God, in his inward temple, by a spirit of recollection, and mental prayer; that you are to attain to this happiness.

Consider 2dly, in this presentation of the Blessed Virgin; on the one hand, the voice of God, calling her to his house (in order to the disposing of her soul for the great things he was to work in her,) in the words of the Psalm (xlii.) *Hear, O daughter and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people, and thy father's house: and the king shall greatly desire thy beauty: for he is the Lord thy God: and him they shall adore:* and on the other hand, the devotion and fervour, with which she corresponds with this call; the resolution, with which she ascends the fifteen degrees, or steps, that led to the temple; resolving to ascend, in like manner by all degrees of virtue, to the very top of perfection; the profound adoration, with which prostrating herself upon the ground, she adored his divine majesty, at her first coming into his house: and the oblation she there makes of her whole self to his perpetual service. Learn Christian souls, the like correspondence with divine grace, when it calls you to God; the like devotion, fervour, and resolution, in his service; the like adoration and oblation of yourselves to him. In this sacred retreat, the Blessed Virgin gave the first example of a consecration of herself to God, by a vow of perpetual virginity (as she was inspired to do by the spirit of God) desiring in all things to choose the better part; and to render the sacrifice she made of her soul and body, more perfect, more firm, and secure, by the means

means of her vow. Learn of her a love for purity and chastity; and a resolution of preserving it, with all the perfection, that thy condition of life shall allow of; and for this end daily beg the assistance of her prayers.

Consider godly, the exercise which the Blessed Virgin followed in the temple: for she certainly was not idle there. As the Holy Ghost continually visited, and solicited her, with his heavenly inspirations, and graces, so she, who never received the grace of God in vain, continually opened the door of her heart to these visits, and co-operated with these graces, with all her strength: and by this means every day of her life, as she increased in age, so she grew in virtue, grace and charity, and sanctity. And as to the employment of her time, whilst she was in the temple, her whole life there was spent in ascending, or descending, by the mystical ladder of Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 12. which reacheth from the earth to heaven, and has God at the top of it. She ascended this ladder, by employing a great part of her days, in spiritual reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation, which are named by St. Bernard, for the steps, or degrees, of this heavenly ladder. And she descended again, by the humble exercise of working with her hands, for the service of the temple, for the use of her companions, or for the benefit of the poor. Yet so, that even whilst her hands were employed at work; her heart was still with God, by prayer, and love. O how holy! O how happy is this kind of ascending, and descending, by Jacob's ladder! Lord give us grace to follow this great example; and to be always upon this ladder which conducts to heaven.

Conclude O my soul, to imitate this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, by frequent oblations, at least, of thyself to God, every day of thy life. Be cautious indeed not to engage thyself by vows, without taking good counsel, and mature deliberation, because of thy frailty: but as to making an offering of thy whole heart, and soul to thy God, with all thy thoughts,

words

words, and actions ; it is what thou canst not do too often.

Nov. 22. *On the Pharisee and the Publican*, Luke xviii.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. ' Two men went up into the temple to pray : the one was a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee, standing prayed thus with himself : O God, I give thee thanks, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in the week : I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven ; but struck his breast, saying : O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other : because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted ? ' This parable was spoken to some, *who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others*. O my soul, beware of this unhappy disposition ; dread these two most pernicious evils, of trusting in thyself, as just, and of despising others. Those that are truly just, are far from thinking themselves so ; they are far from glorying in themselves, far from attributing any thing of good to themselves ; or preferring themselves before any one living. In the judgment, they make of themselves, they always *sit down*, according to the rule of their great master, *in the lowest place* of all. Their eyes are ever open to their own defects, and shut to those of others ; at least where their duty does not require their inspection, or correction of them. They are convinced that they have nothing in themselves, that they can trust to : and that it is only owing to God's great mercy, that they have not been guilty of the most enormous crimes, that any poor wretch has ever committed : and therefore they never presume to despise any one, not even the most scandalous sinner ; lest they should be found worse than him in the sight

sight of God, through their pride, and self-conceit: crimes, which they know to be always an *abomination to the Lord*. See, my soul, if these be thy sentiments?

Consider 2dly, that it was this pride, and self-conceit, that is here condemned in the Pharisee: and which was the cause of his condemnation. He was of the number of those who *trusted in themselves as just, and despised all others*. He was full of himself. In his prayer, he neither craved mercy, nor grace of God: he asked for nothing; because he took himself to be *rich, and wealthy, and not to stand in need of any thing*: whereas, indeed through his pride, he was *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*: Apoc. iii. 17. His whole prayer was only an enumeration of his own good works; with a censure upon the rest of men, and a condemnation of the poor Publican. And as he asked for nothing, so he obtained nothing; but only carried home with him his own condemnation. See my soul, the sad consequences of pride, and its particular opposition to the spirit of prayer: and learn to detest with all thy power, and to drive far from thee, an evil that is so detestable in the sight of God; whom it sacrilegiously robs of his glory: and so pernicious to the souls of men; whom it transforms into devils: and condemns to hell.

Consider 3dly, the lessons we are to learn from the example of the Publican, set before us by our Lord, in this parable, for our imitation. He had a true sense of his sins; and of what he had deserved for his sins: and therefore he condemned himself, as unworthy to lift up his eyes to heaven; or to come near to the altar of God: but standing afar off, with his countenance humbly cast down upon the ground, he struck his breast, saying: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner*. Now this profound humility, this great sense of sorrow and contrition for his sins, which accompanied his prayer, was that which procured him a favourable audience, and a ready discharge from all his sins. His prayer was heard, because it was presented, and recommended by

by a contrite and humble heart: and by the efficacy of it, he went home justified: whilst the proud Pharisee, who was so full of the conceit of his own good works, met with nothing but his condemnation. O let us learn these great lessons of humility, and of a perfect contrition for our sins: let us, as often as we go up to the temple of God, to pray, carry with us this sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and we shall not fail of meeting with the like mercy, as the Publican did.

Conclude to study well these lessons, so much recommended, and so frequently inculcated, by our Lord in the Gospel. O! ever remember that humility, and contrition of heart, bring us to God: but pride, and self-conceit, carry us far away from him. For *he repels the proud, and gives grace to the humble*, St. James iv. 6.

Nov. 23. *On the parable of the grain of mustard-seed,*
Matt. xiii. 31.

CONSIDER first, that under this humble similitude, of so small a thing as a grain of mustard-seed, great and divine truths are delivered to us by Truth herself, when he tells us that *the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed*. *The kingdom of heaven*, in the Gospel, is taken in three different ways; sometimes for God's eternal kingdom, to which the just are invited, Matt. xxv. 34. *Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you, &c.* of which also it is said, Matt. xiii. 43. *The just shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.* At other times the *kingdom of heaven*, is taken for the church of Christ, in which he reigns for ever, as in his *kingdom*; and the institution and intention of which is to bring men to *heaven*: and thus the *kingdom of heaven* is likened to *a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes, &c.* Matt. xiii. 47. and to *ten virgins, who went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom*, Matt. xxv. &c. and of this *kingdom* it is said, that *our Lord shall send his Angels (at the end of the world) and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity;*

iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, &c.
At other times again the kingdom of heaven, is taken for the kingdom, by which God reigns, by faith, grace, and love, in the souls of good Christians: and thus the kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure hidden in a field; and to a pearl of great price, Matt. xiii. 44, 46; and of this kingdom it is said, Luke xvii. 21. *Lo the kingdom of God is within you.* Now the kingdom of heaven, according to all these three acceptations, is likened to a little grain of mustard-seed; because all our good, faith itself, grace, and all our happiness, both for time and eternity, is grounded on humility: we must be little and humble upon earth; we must become as little children, or we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xviii. 3.

Consider 2dly, how well this similitude agrees to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, in his church. Take a view of the beginnings of this kingdom of heaven, in a few poor fishermen; utterly destitute of any one of those advantages, that might recommend them according to the world: see its very founder himself, a poor man, rejected, condemned, and put to a most disgraceful death, by publick authority, at the unanimous desire of both the senate, and the people of his own nation: then observe the most fundamental principles, and practices, upon which this kingdom was first founded and established: its doctrines most shocking to human pride; its maxims and precepts most insupportable to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood: and you shall find in all this the resemblance of the mustard-seed; small, mean, inconsiderable, and contemptible in the eyes of the world. But then observe, how quickly this little grain, after it had been buried as it were, in the earth, sprung up, and even grew into a large tree, which spread its branches far and near; by the wonderful progress the church and kingdom of Christ made in a short time over all the earth: see the many thousands of martyrs, and other Saints, of all states and conditions, it quickly produced; with innumerable examples of

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the most heroick virtues, such as none of the schools or fests of the philosophers, or any of the ancient or modern sages of the world, with all their learning and eloquence, and all their pretensions to wisdom, could ever come up to. And in all this admire and adore the wonderful ways of God; who ever delights in shewing forth his greatness, in things that are little; and in choosing the foolish things of the world, and such as are weak, mean, and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to be the instruments of his greatest works.

Consider 3dly, that this grain of mustard-seed, is also very expressive of *the kingdom of God*; by which he reigns by grace in our souls. The beginnings of this kingdom are small, like the mustard seed; the very first foundations of it must be laid by humility, of which the mustard-seed is the emblem; for *a contrite and humble heart* is the most essential ingredient in the conversion of the soul to God, without which the kingdom of divine grace can never be established in the soul. Then this divine grace, like the grain of mustard-seed, before it can spring up, and produce the tree of Christian perfection, must first be sown, and as it were buried in the earth; by letting it sink deep into the soul, and by harbouring it there, by the means of serious and frequent meditations, and the practice of mental prayer. For it is thus only that the soul can be qualified to grow up in all Christian virtues; till she becomes herself the kingdom of God, and a kind of a heaven upon earth; the very temple, in which God chooses to dwell; the house of God, and the house of prayer. And thus the little grain of seed will grow into a great tree.

Conclude with a serious resolution to seek henceforward in good earnest, this kingdom of heaven, represented by the mustard-seed: which, as thou here seest, is not out of thy reach; since it may be found here upon earth, and that too, without going any farther to seek it, than into thy own interiour: where, if thou properly seek it by recollection and mental prayer, thou shalt quickly come at it; and be put in the pos-

fection of it: and all good things shall come to thee together with it.

NOV. 24. *On the parable of the ten virgins*, Mat. xxv.

CONSIDER first, that these ten virgins, in this parable, represent to us the state of Christians, in this mortal pilgrimage. We are all, by our vocation or calling to the Christian faith, appointed to go forth, with our lamps, to meet the bridegroom: because the business of a Christian, in this life, is to make the best of his way, by the help of the light of faith, towards his God, and a happy eternity; and to be always in a readiness for the coming of Christ, the great bridegroom of our souls. The *lamps*, with which we are to go forth to meet Christ, are *the light of faith*, of all the divine truths of the Christian religion; the *oil*, with which these *lamps* are to be kept burning, are the *works of faith*, that is, the good works, prescribed by the *Gospel*, and particularly the works of mercy and charity, and the love of God above all things. Where this *oil* is wanting, the *lamps* are extinguished, because *faith without good works is dead*. And thrice unhappy they, who at the approaches of that uncertain hour of their departure hence; when they shall be suddenly called upon, as in the middle of the night, to go forth to meet the bridegroom; shall find no *oil* in their *lamps*! Alas! where shall they then go to buy it? In all appearance, before they shall be in a condition to procure any; the *bridegroom will come*; and take along with him those whom he finds *ready*, to his wedding feast; and shut the door against the rest, never, never to be opened, for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, that all Christians belong to one or other of these two companies; represented in this parable, under the denomination of *wise* and *foolish virgins*. The good are *truly wise*; because they are *wise* according to God: and they are *wise* in order to eternity: inasmuch as they *wisely* provide for eternity. But O how truly foolish are the wicked, and all the children

of

of Babylon, who continually forget both God and eternity! For what greater folly, or what greater madness can there be, than to believe as Christians, and to live as infidels; to expect to go to heaven, by the road that leads to hell; to be daily preferring darkness before light, slavery before liberty, misery before happiness, Satan before God; by preferring the state of sin, before the state of grace? In a word, what can be more foolish than blindly to exchange all that is really good, both in time and eternity, for the very worst of evils, and such as shall never have an end? And yet alas! as we daily see, *the number of such fools as these is infinite.* But the folly, that is here particularly censured in this parable, is that of Christians that make no provision of the oil of good works, for the nourishment of their lamps; but go out to meet their Lord, with expectation of being admitted by him to his eternal feast, with Christian faith, without Christian charity; with believing in God, without loving God, and keeping his commandments. Ah my soul, take good care, thou never be so foolish.

Consider gdly, that the great lesson designed for us in this parable, is expressed in those words, with which our Lord concludes, *Watch ye therefore, b.cause you know not the day nor the hour.* The bridegroom in the parable, came in *the middle of the night*, that is, at a time when he was least expected: according to what he has often signified, that he shall come *like a thief in the night*; and that we shall not know the hour of his coming. Not that he desires to surprize us: for if he did, he would not so often warn us: but that he desires we should *always watch*, and be always ready, that so we may never be surprized. *What I say to you*, said he to his disciples, *I say to all: watch.* And again: *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching:* *Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them fit down to meat, and passing he will minister to them*, Luke xii. 37. O who can express, or conceive, the greatness of these heavenly rewards, of

these highest honours, of these never-ending joys; signified here by our Lord's ministring, in this manner, himself to the servants, whom he shall *find watching*! But O the dismal case, on the other hand, of all them that instead of *watching*, and being always *ready*, are quite *asleep* as to all that relates to God, and their souls; and are not awakened, either with the love, or fear of God, till death opens their eyes, when it is too late: and then like the foolish virgins they find the door shut against them; and are sent away, with *I know you not*, into the exterior darkness.

Conclude to bear always in mind this indispensible duty of watching; so frequently inculcated by the Son of God; that so thou mayest never be surprized, and *sleep in death*. Carry always with thee, the lamp of faith, to enlighten thee; but never forget that this light must be kept in, with the oil of good works.

Nov. 25. *On the parable of the talents*, Matt. xxv.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, in this parable, likens himself to *a man going into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods: And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one; to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey*. Our Lord, by his ascension, is gone into heaven, a far country indeed, from this wretched earth, on which we dwell. But *ascending on high, he led captivity captive: he gave gifts to men*, Eph. iv. 8. He has plentifully distributed his goods, and talents amongst his servants; to the end that they might trade with them, and improve the stock, during the time of his absence, till he shall come again, and take an account of their good, or evil management of their trust. He is the universal Lord of all: he distributes his talents amongst us all, according to his good pleasure. All whatsoever we have, as to soul, or body, nature or grace, all belongs to him. We have nothing but what we have received from

from him: nor any thing but what we are accountable for to him. And those that have received more than their neighbours, have nothing to be proud of: for *what hast thou, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 7. that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why doſt thou glory?* On the contrary, those that have received more, ought to be so much the more humble, and to fear so much the more: because they are accountable for so much the more: for where more is given, more will be required. Christians, have you been rightly sensible of these truths? Have you considered your wit, your advantages of soul, or body, your fortune, as you call it, your very time, and all other gifts, either of nature, or of grace, as talents deposited in your hands? Have you ever seriously thought on the strict account you must one day give of them all.

Consider 2dly, the different use that these servants made of their master's money. For *he that had received the five talents, went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five: And in like manner, he that had received the two, gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way, digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.* The two former are proposed for our imitation; that by the like industry, in corresponding with divine grace, and employing in a proper manner all the gifts of God, and laying hold on every opportunity of good, we may continually advance in virtue, and like these good and faithful servants, may improve and double our stock. O how happy shall we be, if we shall trade in this manner, with the talents committed to our charge! And though one of these servants gained five talents, and the other but two: yet as the latter who had received but two, was no less industrious than the former; gaining as much in proportion as he; so as to double his stock as well as he: we find him rewarded in like manner; and the same eulogium given to him by his master: *well done thou good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things, enter thou into*

into the joy of thy Lord, verse 23. O what encouragement is here, for those who have received fewer talents: since we see, if they make proper use of what they have received, they shall be rewarded equally with them that have received more! But O the sublime reward, that is here set before us, in these words; *enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* For what is this *joy of our Lord*? O nothing less than the everlasting possession of himself; an universal, incomprehensible, eternal good.

Consider 3dly, how he, that buried his master's money, is here condemned, both as a *lothful* and a *wicked servant*: as a warning to all such Christians, as having received talents, that is, gifts, graces or advantages, of any kind, from God; do not employ them to his greater honour and glory, or to their own, or their neighbours improvement, or advancement in good; but through sloth and indolence, let them lie unregarded, and as it were hidden, and buried in the earth: even in this unhappy earth, of the world and the flesh, which engages all their thoughts and affections, more than the honour and glory of their Lord; or the eternal welfare of their own dear souls. But see, where all this is like soon to end, by the sentence pronounced against this naughty servant: *Take ye away the talent from him, and give it to him that hath the ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have, shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* But if the unprofitable servant came off so ill, who only buried his master's money; what will become of so many thousands, who do not content themselves with making no good use of the talents, they are entrusted with; but squander them away, and even pervert and turn them all against their master, by making them the instruments of sin? O my soul, hast thou never been so unhappy?

Conclude

Conclude to look well to thyself, by taking an account of all the talents deposited in thy hands: and examining well, what use thou hast made of them to this day: to the end that if they have been hitherto, either buried, or abused, thou mayst now at least begin to employ them in such manner, as may entitle thee to the approbation of thy great master; rather than to be condemned, as a wicked or slothful servant, to the eternal loss, both of thy talents, and of thy soul.

Nov. 26. *On the parable of the vineyard, let out to husbandmen, Matt. xxi. 33.*

CONSIDER first, what our Lord here tells us: that there was a certain householder, who planted a vineyard; and made a hedge round about it; and dug in it a wine-pres, and built a tower; and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country. This householder represents to us God himself: and this vine-yard, which he has planted, is his universal church. But see, my soul, what care he has bestowed upon this vineyard: fencing it in with his excellent laws, and his perpetual protection, as with a hedge; digging in it a wine-pres, by the institution of his divine sacraments, the sources of his heavenly grace, pressed out for us, from the sacred wounds of our crucified Saviour; and building in its favour a tower, in which he might watch over it, by his extraordinary providence, as well to keep evils away from it, as to provide it with all good. This vineyard he lets out to husbandmen; that is, to all men, inasmuch as he has given to all men a part, or a share, in which each one is to labour; to wit, his own soul at least, and the souls of as many others, as he has committed to his charge. And having done this, he withdraws himself, as it were, into a strange country: by keeping himself out of our sight, during the time of our mortal life, and patiently waiting for the fruit of this vineyard, which we are to furnish in due season. O what lessons have we here, as well with regard to the goodness of our God, on the one hand, in all that he has done for this vineyard, and for every part of it, and consequently

consequently for every Christian soul; as with regard to our indispensable duty, on the other hand, of corresponding with this his goodness, by our labours, in producing, and furnishing the fruit he expects!

Consider 2dly, with regard to thyself, what this great Lord has done for the vineyard of thy soul in particular; by innumerable favours and graces in every kind, which he has bestowed upon thee all thy life long, till this very hour; and by many happy opportunities of good, which he has afforded thee, (which if duly embraced by thee, might have made thee a Saint) beyond what he has granted to thousands of others. Then see if he may not say of thee, what he said heretofore of his vineyard of Jerusalem (*Isai. v. 4.*) *What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done to it?* But after all this care on his part, what fruit hast thou hitherto produced for him? Alas! may he not justly complain of thee, as he did of that Jewish vineyard, that instead of the good grapes, which he looked for from thee, thou hast only brought forth wild grapes? O dread then what he threatens in the same place, in consequence of his being thus disappointed; in the words that immediately follow. *I will shew you, said he, what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will make it desolate. It shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged: but briars and thorns shall come up: and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.* Can any thing be more terrible than these threats of the soul's being thus abandoned, and given up to a reprobate sense, in punishment of her still bringing forth no good fruit, after so many repeated favours and graces.

Consider 3dly, in this parable, how the Lord of the vineyard sent at different times his servants to the husbandmen to receive the fruits of it: but they persecuted them, and put them to death; till at length he sent his only Son, whom they used in like manner. In punishment of which, *he brought those evil men to an evil end, and*

and let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, that should render him the fruit in due season. This was literally verified in the Jews, to whom this parable was addressed, by our Lord, a few days before his passion. God sent to them at divers times his servants the prophets, to call for the fruits of his vineyard; but they returned him no fruits: they even persecuted his messengers; and put several of them to death. At length he sent them his only Son; and him they cast off, condemned to death, and crucified. And therefore, as our Lord here foretells, *the kingdom of God* (that is the vineyard of his church) *has been long ago taken away from them, to be given to a nation*, (that is to the Gentiles) *that should bring forth the fruits thereof.* But all this is applicable, more or less; to the particular vineyard, of the soul of each Christian. Wherefore as to thy own part, O my soul, reflect how far thou hast imitated those unhappy husbandmen, in refusing to render to the Lord of thy vineyard, in due season, the fruits which he has so often called for, at thy hands, by his messengers; that is, by his preachers, by his word, by his inspirations, by reproaches of conscience, &c. and in persecuting those whom he sent to thee, by wilfully resisting his graces, stifling his inspirations, and setting at nought all them who sought to bring thee to good. Alas! hast thou not, by thy obstinacy in sin, as much as lay in thee, even crucified again the Son of God. O take heed, lest if thou go on in this perversity, thou fall under the like sentence, as the Jews, did, of being brought to an evil end; and the kingdom of God be taken away from thee, and given to another.

Conclude, to look well to the vineyard of thy soul, that it may, by due correspondence with divine grace, bring forth its fruit in due season: even such good grapes, as may be acceptable to the great Lord, who has let out this vineyard to thee, and who ceases not to furnish thee with all proper helps to make it fruitful.

Nov. 27. *On the merciful dealings of Christ our Lord with sinners.*

CONSIDER first, how Christ our Lord, whilst he was here visible upon earth, was pleased in a particular manner to shew favour and mercy to poor sinners; and to express on all occasions his loving kindness to them. Insomuch that the Scribes and Pharisees, who being full of a conceit of their own justice, despised sinners, and kept them at a distance, saying, *depart from me, come not near me; because thou art unclean.* Isai. lxv. 5. were ever objecting to this merciful Lord, that he suffered *sinners to draw near unto him: that he received sinners, and did eat with them: that he was a friend of publicans and sinners, &c.* Unhappy men, who did not understand, that his infinite mercy and charity had brought him down from heaven, on purpose to seek and to save sinners! And still more unhappy in proudly taking themselves to be just, and not sinners; and therefore rejecting him, *who came not to call the just, but sinners,* Matt. ix. 13. vainly imagining they had no need of him. Christians, see here, and admire, embrace and love, the great mercy of your Redeemer, and his tender bowels of compassion for poor sinners: and how much soever you may be involved in sin, assure yourselves that he is ever ready to receive you; if you will repent in a proper manner, and return to him. But O beware of the blindness of the Pharisees: and of a vain conceit of your own justice! For the first step towards your obtaining mercy, must be an humble sense of your sins, and of the great need you have of mercy.

Consider 2dly, the many instances, recorded in the Gospel, of this merciful disposition of Christ our Lord, in favour of sinners. As in his calling them to him, *Mat. xi. 28.* and even making them his disciples, as in the case of Matthew, &c. and his frequently conversing most familiarly with them. To which add those remarkable

remarkable examples of Magdalene, *Luke* viii. of the Samaritan woman, *John* iv. of the woman taken in adultery, *John* viii. of the woman of Canaan, *Mat.* xv. of Zaccheus, *Luke* xix. and of the thief upon the cross, *Luke* xxiii. And as both in his life, and at his death, so after his resurrection also, he gave the like proofs of his loving kindness, and his tender mercies to sinners, in the favour he shewed both to Magdalene, and to Peter (who had so lately denied him) by making them his first visits, after his rising from the dead. O what encouragements are here, O my soul, for us to look for the like mercy, from this same Lord; who is still as rich in mercy as ever! But then we must remember to go to him with the like disposition of faith and repentance, love and humility, as these happy penitents did; and to take care, like them, to return no more to our sins.

Consider 3dly, the parables, by which our Lord has shewed forth to us, in a most lively manner, his infinite goodness and mercy to poor sinners: as for instance, that of the *good Shepherd*, *Luke* xv; who having lost one of his sheep, leaves the rest of his flock, and goes in quest of that which was lost, and ceases not to seek it, till he has found it: and when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders with joy; and coming home, calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying, rejoice with me because I have found my sheep that was lost. In like manner that of the charitable Samaritan; who shewed such tender mercy to the man that had fallen among thieves: and that of the father of the prodigal child, who received so kindly and lovingly his ungracious son, returning home to him. In all which, my soul, thou mayest see, a lively, and a lovely image, of that tender mercy, compassion, and goodness, which thy Redeemer has so often exercised, and continues daily to exercise, in favour of sinners. But what can he think too much, of all that he does for them, for whom he has even ~~shed~~ the last drop of his blood? O blessed be his mercy

mercy for ever, which is commonly working such wonders for poor sinners! Ah, my soul, were it not for these wonders of his mercy, we should long since have dwelt in hell!

Conclude to lay hold of this mercy of thy Saviour, whilst thou hast time; by turning thyself away from all thy sins, from this very hour, and running to this Father of mercies; and dedicating thyself eternally to his service. For why shouldst thou any longer abuse his goodness, and love, by obstinacy in sin: or run the risk of provoking his justice, to revenge upon thee the contempt of his mercy?

Nov. 28. *On the conversion of Zaccheus, Luke xix.*

CONSIDER first, how, when our Lord was walking through the city of Jericho, there was a man there named Zaccheus, who was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich: and he sought to see Jesus, who he was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him, for he was to pass that way. See here, Christians, the first steps towards this wonderful conversion of a rich worldling; that is, of one of that sort of men, which is usually the most remote from the kingdom of God. 1. He desired to see Jesus who he was. Good desires are the first beginning of all our good: these incline us to seek to see Jesus; and to come at him, by true wisdom; which consists in truly knowing him, what he is in himself, and what he is in regard to us. Now the beginning of this true wisdom, as we learn from the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, is an earnest desire after it: and this is seeking, like Zaccheus, to see who Jesus is. 2. He was low of stature: and could not see Jesus for the crowd: and therefore he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him: for he was to pass that way. Alas! poor sinners, we are also low of stature through our unhappy weakness, and manifold miseries: we are hin-

hindered from seeing Jesus, by *the crowd*; that is, by distractions, worldly solicitudes, disorderly affections of our hearts, and dissipation of thought, in which we live, and by the tumult of our passions; and therefore in order to see and know him, we must get out of the crowd, by retirement and recollection of thought; we must run before, by disengagement of our heart from worldly affections; we must climb up the *sycamore* (the name of which implies *a silly fig-tree*) by treading under our feet the false maxims of worldly wisdom, and human respects, and embracing the maxims of the Gospel, which the world calls foolishness. We must get above the heads of the worldly crowd, by climbing up the tree of the cross; which the world despises and abhors; and then we shall be able to know Jesus, and to contemplate him: for that is the way, by which he passes.

Consider 2dly, that when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said to him: *Zaccheus, make haste and come down: for to day I must abide in thy house.* And he made haste and came down, and received him with joy. And when they all saw it, they murmured, saying: that he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a *finner*. See here, Christians, how true that is of the wise man, *Wisdom vi. 13, &c.* that wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her, and preventeth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them. Our Lord does not only suffer himself to be seen by this publican, but he looks up at him; he calls to him, to make haste, and to come down to him: he even invites himself into his house to be his guest, and brings along with him salvation into that house. O the happy consequences of seeking to see, and to know Jesus; and of getting out of the crowd, into the sycamore tree, to contemplate him! But then we must also learn from the example of Zaccheus, a ready correspondence with the grace of our Lord, when he looks up and calls: we must not let him go away, on this occasion: we

must make haste, and come down to him, without delay: we must accept of the favour of the visit he offers us, with thankfulness: we must conduct him with joy into our inward house; we must make him welcome there, by a proper entertainment of devotion and love: thus he will bring *salvation* with him to our house.

Consider 3dly, what entertainment Zaccheus offered to our Lord, when he had received him into his house: *Behold, Lord, saith he, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have wronged any man of any thing, I restore him fourfold.* He made a sacrifice to him upon the spot of his predominant passion; even of that love of the mammon of iniquity, which before had been his idol. He gave up at once all his worldly riches, which were so near his heart, to be employed either in alms, or in making restitution fourfold, for all ill gotten goods. He laid down all his sins at the feet of his Saviour, with a sincere detestation and repentance for them all; and a firm resolution to return to them no more; but to make the best satisfaction he could for them. Now this was the most agreeable feast, he could make for our Lord; who was pleased immediately to declare: *this day is salvation come to this house: because he also is a son of Abraham: for the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* O what comfort was here for Zaccheus! O what encouragement for us poor sinners, to imitate the readines and sincerity of his conversion, that we may also with him be acknowledged for *true sons of Abraham* by following the example of his faith, obedience, and sacrifice; and that the like salvation may come also to our house from him, who ever delights in seeking, and saving that which was lost!

Conclude to consider the conversion of Zaccheus, as a model of a perfect conversion; and to strive to imitate it, in every part. Often invite Christ into thy house; and entertain him there in spirit: but see that thou make him a proper feast, even as Zaccheus did; by

by sacrificing to him the dearest affections of thy heart; and never let him go, without giving his blessing to thy house.

Nov. 29. *On Christ's weeping over Jerusalem, Luke xix.*

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, coming for the last time, to visit Jerusalem, a few days before his passion; *when he drew near, seeing the city he wept over it saying: if thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.* Our Lord in this his last coming to Jerusalem, is accompanied with crowds of people, bearing branches of palms in their hands, and welcoming him with Hosannas of joy: but his attention is engaged by the melancholy object, he has before his eyes of that unhappy city, and of all the evils that were coming upon it, which he bewails in this pathetick manner. Not that the beating down of stone-walls, or the destroying of houses, was a matter worthy of the tears of the Son of God: nor yet that men, who are all doomed to die, should die a little before their time: but the miseries, which he lamented, were of another kind: *viz.* the blindness, and the hardness of heart of the inhabitants of this city, so highly favoured by his visits; their extreme ingratitude, and their obstinacy in sin; and that final reprobation, and eternal damnation, which they were quickly drawing down upon their own heads, by their repeated abuses, and wilful resistance of those extraordinary graces, which he offered them at this time of their visitation. Christians, beware lest the like abuses of divine grace should draw down the like judgments upon you also.

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Consider

Consider 2dly, that you have at present *your day*, as Jerusalem had then. This is *your day*; a time of mercy and grace: in which the Son of God daily visits you, by many gracious calls, and inspirations: his sacraments, and sacrifice, the fountains of your Saviour, are now continually open for you; together with all manner of helps for your salvation. But what use do you make of this *your day*? For it is short, and will quickly be at an end: and then *the day of the Lord* must take place. Have you a right sense and knowledge, *in this your day, of the things that are for your peace, and for your true welfare?* Do the things of God and eternity make a due impression on your souls? Is the conduct of your life regulated by them? Or are not these great truths, through your own fault, *hidden at present from your eyes?* O take care lest if you pass by unregarded this *time of your visitation*, as Jerusalem did, *the days should suddenly come upon you also, when your spiritual enemies shall cast a trench about you, and straiten you on every side, and beat you flat to the ground, &c. viz. when the sorrows of death shall encompass you, and the perils of hell shall find you;* And the grace of God, which you have so long abused, shall leave you, in the hands of your enemies.

Consider 3dly, how our Saviour, after weeping over Jerusalem, and denouncing to it its final desolation; *entering into the temple, began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought: saying to them, it is written, my house is a house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves,* Luke xix. 45. Giving us to understand, by his proceeding on this occasion, that the profanation of the house of God, and of sacred things, the love of gain more than of godliness, and a gross neglect of prayer, and other religious duties, is the high road to blindness, and hardness of heart, and consequently to a dreadful and eternal reprobation. Christians, take care lest imitating in these particulars the guilt of the Jews, you draw upon your heads the like punishments. The soul of every Christian ought to be

be the temple of the living God, 2 Cor. vi. 16, and in that quality the house of prayer. O take care you never be so unhappy as to turn this house of prayer into a den of thieves: by shutting out from hence the fear and love of God; and letting in sin and Satan.

Conclude to attend, in this your day, to the things that appertain to your peace: and not to neglect the time of your visitation: lest by a want of corresponding with grace you be so unhappy as to fill up the measure of your sins; and suddenly to fall, when you least expect it, into the hands of the living God.

Nov. 30. On St. Andrew.

CONSIDER first, the lessons we are to learn from the example of this great Saint. St. Andrew before he came to Christ, was a disciple of St. John the Baptist (*John i. 35, 40.*) trained up to devotion, and penance, in that excellent school of the great forerunner of our Lord. See, my soul, the great advantages of early piety, and of a saint-like education! *It is good for a man, faith the prophet, when he hath born the yoke from his youth, Lament. iii. 27.* And *It is a proverb, saith Solomon, Prov. xxii. 6. a young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* St. John, the true friend of the bridegroom, who sought not his own honour and glory, but the spiritual advantage of his disciples, directed them to Jesus. St. Andrew and another, heard him saying of our Lord, *Behold the Lamb of God:* and they presently followed him, and accompanied him to the place of his abode, and there they staid with him that day. O what entertainment did he give them! O what heavenly conversation did they there enjoy! Christians, do you take care to fit up a lodging for Christ, in your own interiour; and invite him in thither; and entertain him there, by the exercise of recollection, and of mental prayer: and you may also be so happy as to relish the admirable sweetness of his divine conversation.

Consider 2dly, that St. Andrew had no sooner found Christ himself, but he immediately endeavoured to impart the same happiness to his brother Simon, and forthwith brought him to our Lord! Happy they who having found Jesus, and relished his sweetnes, endeavour, like St. Andrew, to bring their brethren also to him; according to that of the Scripture, (*Apoc. xxii. 17.*) *Let him that heareth, say Come,* i. e. let him, that heareth the sweet voice, and invitation of the Spirit of God, in his own soul, calling him to Christ, invite as many others as he can, and bring them along with him. But though these two brothers, began now to be acquainted with our Lord, and to believe in him; they had not as yet left all to follow him. This grace was reserved for another time: when, as we read, (*Mat. iv. 18.*) *Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, (for they were fishermen) and he saith to them; come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men, and they immediately leaving their nets followed him.* Learn, Christians, from this example, a ready correspondence with the calls and graces of God: even though he should call upon you, to leave all you possess, and to follow him: how much more when he calls for a much easier sacrifice; such as the giving up for the love of him, some petty toy, or worldly bauble, which has taken possession of your heart. Alas! the affections to these fooleries are like nets, from which you must be disengaged, before you can truly follow Christ.

Consider 3dly, that from this time, St. Andrew adhered to our Lord, as his individual companion, and disciple: and after his ascension into heaven, employed his whole life in propagating by his labours, by his preaching, and by his miracles, the glory of his master's name, and his blessed kingdom; and in procuring salvation to innumerable souls. Neither did he cease, till after many sufferings and tribulations, (the usual portion of the disciples of Christ) he laid down his

his life, for the love of his Lord, following him faithfully and constantly unto death, even to the death of the cross. But O with what affection did he salute the cross, prepared for him: when according to the acts of his martyrdom, coming within sight of that happy instrument, which was to send him to his God; he cried out: 'O good cross, which hast received beauty, and glory, from bearing the body of my Lord! O cross which I have long desired, tenderly loved, and continually sought after, and which now at length art here prepared, to satisfy my longing soul: receive me now into thy embraces; take me away from amongst mortals, and conduct me to my master: that through thee he may receive me, who redeemed me, by dying on thee.' Christians, what are your dispositions with regard to the cross, prepared for you? There is no going to heaven for you, by any other way, than that of the cross. Are you sensible of this? Do you, like St. Andrew, lovingly embrace this blessed instrument, which is to bring you to your God and to a happy eternity. Two considerations in particular recommended the cross to St. Andrew, for the object of his affection and love: *viz.* the example of his master, who had sanctified the cross, by his own sufferings and death: and the cross's being the sovereign means of divine appointment to bring him to his master, and to unite him eternally to him. O let the like considerations recommend the cross also to your love and affection!

Conclude to labour to imitate the virtues of St. Andrew: more especially his early piety, his attention to all the divine calls, his ready correspondence with the grace of God, his constant adhesion to Christ, and his dedicating his whole life to his love and service, and the pious dispositions of his soul with relation to the cross. There is no better way of honouring the Saints, than by endeavouring to be Saints, by an imitation of their lives.

DECEMBER. 1. *On the time of Advent.*

CONSIDER first that the time of *Advent* (so called from being set aside by the church for worthily celebrating the *Advent*, that is, the *coming* of Christ) is a penitential time, and a time of devotion; in which we are every day called upon by the church of God, to *prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight his paths*: to enter into the like dispositions to those which St. John the Baptist required of the people, when he was sent to preach to them conversion and penance; in order to prepare them for their *Messias*: that so we also by turning away now from our sins, by sorrow and *repentance*; and turning ourselves to the Lord our God with our whole heart: by love and affection, may dispose our souls to welcome our *Saviour*, whose birth we are about to celebrate; and to embrace in such manner the mercy and grace, which he brings with him at his first coming, as to escape hereafter those dreadful judgments, which his justice will execute upon impenitent sinners, at his second coming. See then my soul, that thou dedicate this holy time to suitable exercises of devotion and penance, that thou mayest answer the end of this sacred institution.

Consider 2dly, in what manner we are all summoned, by the church, at the beginning of this holy time, in the words of St. Paul (*Rom. xiii, 11*, read in the epistle of the first Sunday in *Advent*) to dispose ourselves now for Christ. *Knowing the time*; says the apostle, *that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep: for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is passed (or far spent) the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light: let us walk decently, as in the day, &c.* O! my soul, let us consider these words as particularly addressed to us, in order to awaken us, and to stir us up to begin now a new life. Alas! have we not hitherto been quite asleep, as to the greatest

greatest of all our concerns? Are not far the greatest part of Christians quite asleep, by their unaccountable indolence in the great business of the salvation of their souls, and of a happy eternity? Are they not sleeping too, which is worse, in the very midst of dangers, and of mortal enemies, who are continually plotting their destruction; and even upon the very brink of a precipice, which if they fall down, will let them in a moment into hell? O let us then all hearken seriously to this summons; and rouse ourselves now, whilst we have time, out of this unhappy lethargy: and from this hour begin to apply ourselves in good earnest to that only business for which we came into this world. O let us *cast off now and for ever the works of darkness, and put on Jesus Christ.*

Consider 3dly, that on the first Sunday of Advent, the terrors also of God's justice are set before our eyes, in the description given in the gospel of the great accounting day: to the end, that they who will not correspond with the sweet invitations of God's mercy; and awake from sleep, at the summons addressed to them in the epistle; may be roused at least by the thunder of his justice, denounced in the gospel: and be induced by the wholesome fear of the dreadful judgments, that are continually hanging over the heads of impenitent sinners, to make good use of this present time of mercy; lest hereafter there should be neither time, nor mercy for them. Ah! sinners, *if this day you hear the voice of the Lord,* either sweetly inviting you, with the allurements of his mercy; or terrifying you, with the threats of his judgments; *see you harden not your hearts.* For now is your time. Sleep on no longer, lest you come to sleep in death: as it happened to them of old, who by refusing to hearken to God's voice, provoked him so far, that *he swore to them in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest.* O remember that the day of the Lord, and his judgments shall come as a snare upon all them that will not watch, *Luke xxi. 35.*

Conclude

Conclude to enter now into the true spirit of this holy time; which is a penitential spirit; and to *prepare the way of the Lord*; by putting away all thy sins, and purifying thy soul for him: thus shalt thou welcome him at his coming; and shalt be welcome to him.

DECEM. 2. *On what we must do to prepare the way of the Lord.*

CONSIDER first, that the church, in the office, appointed for this holy time, frequently puts us in mind of the mission, and preaching of St. John the Baptist, and of the manner in which he endeavoured to prepare the people for Christ: to the end that we may learn from the doctrine of this great forerunner of our Lord, in what dispositions we ought also to be, if we would duly prepare the way for him. Now what the Baptist continually preached to the people was: That they should turn from their evil ways; and *do penance: because the kingdom of heaven was at hand*: that they should *bring forth fruits worthy of penance*; if they would *escape the wrath to come*; and this without delay: for that *now the axe was laid at the root of the tree*; and that *every tree that did not bring forth good fruit should be cut down and cast into the fire*. That they should not flatter themselves, with expectation of impunity, or security, because they had Abraham for their father: for that *God was able to raise up from the very stones children to Abraham: and therefore without a thorough conversion from their sins, they were to expect that the kingdom of God, and the grace and dignity of being children of Abraham (the father of all the faithful) should be taken away from them, and given to the Gentiles*. He added, that *he baptized them indeed with water unto penance: but that another should come after him, who should baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire: that his fan was in his hand, and that he should thoroughly cleanse his floor*.

floor, and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he would burn with unquenchable fire, Mat. iii. This was the way St. John prepared the people for Christ; and it is by our conforming ourselves in practice to these his lessons, at this holy time, we must also *prepare the way of the Lord*; and be prepared for him.

Consider 2dly, that the great theme of the preaching of St. John, in order to prepare the way of the Lord, was the virtue of *penance*: inasmuch as this was the only means, by which sinners could ever effectually be reconciled to God, after actual mortal sin; and therefore, this fame was at all times perpetually inculcated, by all that were ever sent with commission from God, to reclaim unhappy souls that had gone astray from him. It is then by this virtue of *penance*, we also are to prepare the way of the Lord, at this holy time: this is the proper devotion for the time of Advent. Now this virtue of *penance* (which always was, always is, and always will be, absolutely and indispensably necessary for the bringing back sinners to God) implies three things: first the renouncing and detesting all our sins; by which we have offended so good a God; secondly, a turning of ourselves to God, with our whole heart, and a dedicating ourselves henceforward to him, both for time and eternity; and thirdly an offering of ourselves to him, to make him what satisfaction we can for our past offences, by a penitential life. Christians, this is our great business at this holy time: if we hope to prepare ourselves for Christ; this is the proper exercise for it: to pass over in our mind, in the bitterness of our soul, all our years that have been spent in sin; to bewail and lament, every day of this holy season, all our past treasons against the divine majesty; to turn now to God with our whole heart; to offer our whole souls to him, to exercise ourselves in his love; and to enter into new articles with him of an eternal allegiance, with a full determination of rather dying, than being any more disloyal to him; and letting not one day pass without offering

offering him some penitential satisfaction for our past guilt, to be united to, and sanctified by, the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. O how happy are they that employ the time of Advent in this manner! O how willingly will our Lord, at the approaching Christmas, communicate himself to such souls as these!

Consider 3dly, that at the approaching solemnity of Christmas, the church, by thrice celebrating the sacred mysteries in the same day, commemorates three different births of Christ: his *eternal* birth from his Father; his *temporal* birth from his mother; and his *spiritual* birth, by which he is born by grace, in our souls. Hence the best devotion, for the time of Christmas, is that which conduces the most to bring Christ into our souls by this *spiritual* birth: and consequently the best devotion for the time of Advent, is to cleanse and to purify our souls, that he may find nothing in them, that may disqualify them, for his visits; or hinder him from coming to be spiritually born in us. For he will never come into an unclean soul, nor be born in a mansion where Satan resides. See then, my soul, what measures thou art to take at this holy time, to prepare thy inward house for the spiritual birth, of this king of glory. 1. Thou must cleanse it and purify it from sin and Satan. 2. Thou must adorn it with virtue and piety: and 3. thou must daily invite thy Lord thither by fervent prayer: thus shalt thou *prepare the way of the Lord*, in the manner, that is best pleasing to him.

Conclude to put in practice all these lessons to the best of thy power at this holy time: an Advent spent in this manner, in devotion and penance, cannot fail of bringing thee a happy Christmas.

DECEM. 3. *On the miracles of Christ our Lord.*

CONSIDER first, that Christ our Lord did not only teach us his heavenly truths, by his preaching, by his parables, and by his maxims, laid down in the gospel: but his whole life, and all his actions, were designed to be an instruction to us: and that his miracles in particular were not only wrought to confirm our faith, and our hope in him; and to be so many evidences of his goodness and charity to poor mortals: but to give us also great lessons for our practice, if we would take care to look well into them, and to learn the mysterious meaning of them. Especially, we must ever remember, that as the diseases, and corporal infirmities we are liable to in this life, mystically represent the spiritual maladies of our vices and passions; so we are to learn from the miracles wrought by our Redeemer, in healing all manner of diseases of the body, to apply continually to him for the cure of the like diseases in the soul: which are indeed the far more grievous evils of the two; and if not healed, are attended with far more dreadful consequences. But alas! how seldom do the children of this world take to heart the seeking the cure of these spiritual diseases? Or apply, in a proper manner, to this great physician, for his aid; who, when he was here upon earth, never cast off any that applied to him? So much more are worldlings concerned for the body, than for the soul; for time than for eternity. O, my soul, let us at least be more wise.

Consider 2dly, what were the miracles, which our Saviour more frequently wrought, from the time of his first beginning to preach his Gospel? *He went about all Galilee, says St. Matthew, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people: and his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all sick people, &c. and such as were possessed by devils,*

devils, and lunaticks, and paralyticks, and he healed them, Matt. iv. 23. And there came to him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others: and they cast them down at his feet, and he healed them, Matt. xv. 30. And whithersoever he entered into towns, or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him, that they might touch but the hem of his garment, and as many as touched him were made whole, Mark vi. 56. And all the multitude sought to touch him, for virtue went out from him and healed all, Luke vi. 19. See Christians, how ready your Lord was, during his mortal life, to cure all kind of bodily diseases, and how wholesome it was to come near him, or to touch either him, or his garments, by reason of the virtue, that went out from him, to heal all. O assure yourselves he is no less ready, or willing, now to heal your souls: for his power, his mercy, his goodness, his charity and love for you, knows no bounds! It is no ways diminished, since he shed his blood for the love of you, and carried it with him into the sanctuary of heaven, there to present it to his Father in your behalf. Examine then, and see what your diseases are; and run with confidence to him, for your cure. You need not go far to seek him: for though he is gone to heaven; he will still be *with you, even to the end of the world.* You may find him in the Eucharist: where a virtue continually goes out from him, for the healing of all: you may find him at any time, and in any place, in his divine person; especially in his temple, in the centre of your souls: for there is no place, in which he either more willingly resides, or more frequently works his wonders, than in the interiour of such Christians, as duly seek him, by a spirit of recollection, and an internal life.

Consider 3dly, that Christ our Lord, continually *went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil,* Acts x. 38. As he came to deliver men from the tyranny and slavery of the devil:

so his miracles were most frequently wrought in casting out devils; in destroying the works of the devil; and in forcing Satan out of his usurped dominions. See Christians, what occasion your souls may have for this sort of miracles. Are they not spiritually possessed, or possessed, by this wicked spirit; by the means of some or other of the capital sins: for where any of these are predominant, there Satan reigns. Does not this wicked one render you spiritually deaf and dumb; with regard to the voice of God, and the confession of your sins? Does he not bend you down to the earth by worldly affections; like the crooked woman, in the Gospel, *Luke* xiii. 16. Does he not make you blind, by obstructing your interior sight, with regard to the light of truth, &c? In all these cases, you must run to Christ our Lord, to be dispossessed, or to be delivered from this mortal enemy of your souls. Christ's hand is not shortened: he will cast out this wicked one, at your humble request; but O take care not to be of the number of those, who by wholly giving themselves up to their carnal passions, are rather *swine* than Christians: for of such as these, the devil has so great a hold, that he will not easily be cast out. Our Lord himself gave a licence to a whole legion of devils to enter into swine: and whither did they hurry them, but down a precipice, into the deep, where they all perished? Take care this never be your case!

Conclude to consider henceforward, the miracles of our Lord, not only as confirmations of the truth, of the Christian faith; and evidences of the power, mercy, and goodness of the author of it; and consequently, as strong inducements to believe in him, hope in him, and love him above all things: but also to study well the practical lessons, which are to be learnt from these miracles: inasmuch as they point out to us the sovereign means of ridding ourselves of all our evils, by having recourse, with a lively faith, and humble prayer, to the great source of all our good.

DECEM. 4. *On our Lord's cleansing the lepers.*

CONSIDER first, that the cleansing the *leprosy*, is one of those miracles of our Lord, which is more particularly instructive; because the *leprosy* was an emblem or figure of sin. Hence we find so many prescriptions, in the Levitical law, (*Levit. xiii. and xiv.*) with regard to such as had contracted the *leprosy*; and the judgment that was to be made of them by the priests, to whose inspection they were committed by the law; and the rites and sacrifices by which they were to be cleansed: which were all figurative, and expressive of what was to be done by, or for them, who had contracted the spiritual *leprosy* of sin. The first mentioned to have been cleansed by our Lord of his *leprosy*, was he that *came* (after our Saviour's coming down from the mountain, *Mat. viii. 2, 3.*) and *worshipped him* saying: *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.* And *Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou made clean.* And *immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* See Christians, by this example, in what manner you are to apply to your Lord, if you desire to be cleansed of your spiritual *leprosy*. See with what a strong and lively faith, accompanied with a profound humility, this leper presents himself before our Saviour: and learn to imitate him. Faith and humility are very efficacious with your heavenly physician. It was appointed, *Levit. xiii. 44, &c.* that whosoever was defiled with the *leprosy*, and separated by the judgment of the priest, should keep a respectful distance, with regard to the rest of the faithful; and should, both by his outward habit, and by the cry of his voice, declare aloud, that he was defiled and unclean: to signify the humble dispositions which are necessary in the case of the spiritual *leprosy*, before we can expect to meet with a cure.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord having cleansed the leper, to teach us to avoid all ostentation and vain glory,

glory, in doing good, said to him: *See thou tell no man: but go shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift, which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.* Our Lord sent those whom he cleansed from the leprosy to the priests, to conform to the prescription of the law of Moses; and at the same time, to give us to understand, that even, when by the grace of a perfect contrition, he cleanses souls from the leprosy of sin, he still expects that they should shew themselves to his priests, by a sincere confession of their sins; in consequence of his divine law, by which he has given to his priests the inspection and judgment of the leprosy of the soul; with the power of *binding* and *loosing*, *forgiving and retaining sins*; and the *dispensation of all his mysteries* and sacraments. The person that was cleansed from the leprosy, and sent to the priest, was ordered to *offer the gifts which Moses commanded*, and consequently to observe the other prescriptions of the law (*Levit. xiii.*) He was, in order to his purification, to be sprinkled seven times, with the blood of a bird, immolated over living waters; he was to wash all his cloaths; he was to shave all his hair; and to be washed himself all over with water; and then after seven days, he was to offer a burnt-offering, and a sin-offering; and so to be fully cleansed and expiated, by the blood of the lamb, offered for sin; and by the oil of the sacrifice, that had been sprinkled seven times before the Lord: to signify to us, by these mysterious ceremonies, that such as desire to be thoroughly cleansed from the spiritual leprosy of sin; must by repeated washings, of their consciences, with the waters of compunction; by frequently sprinkling their souls with the blood of the Lamb of God; and by the applying to them the unction of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost, attain to this perfect purification.

Consider 3dly, what we read, *Luke xvii.* of ten other lepers, who applied to our Lord for their cure: *they stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, O master, have mercy on us.* And when he saw

them, he said: go shew yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. See my soul, how quickly thy Lord is moved to shew mercy to them, that with a loud cry, call for mercy: that is, with the loud cry of fervent prayer; joined with a profound humility, and a true sense of their own misery and unworthiness: expressed in the case of these men, by their standing afar off, as not daring to come nearer to our Lord, by reason of their uncleanness. O let us learn to apply to our Saviour, for the cure of our spiritual leprosy, with the like fervour and humility! But then mark also what follows: *And one of them when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice glorified God: and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks: and this man was a Samaritan.* And Jesus answering said, were there not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return, and to give glory to God but this stranger. O Christians, let us learn by this example the sentiments of love, and gratitude, devotion, and humility; with which we ought to praise, and glorify God, after being cleansed by his mercy, from the unhappy leprosy of sin: the great value also we ought to set upon the grace of our purification and reconciliation to his divine majesty; and the care we ought to take never more to incur this worst of all uncleanness, and of all evils. Alas! where these sentiments are wanting in penitents, it is much to be apprehended, that they are not far off from relapsing again into their former leprosy, and that in a worse degree than before.

Conclude to dread, and to fly from the spiritual leprosy of sin, more than from any other evil: but if at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have incurred this dreadful uncleanness: learn from the foregoing considerations; to whom, and in what manner, you are to apply for your cure; and how you are to behave, after having found this mercy.

DEC.

DECEM. 5. *On our Lord's stilling the storm at sea; and feeding the multitudes.*

CONSIDER first, the lessons we are to learn from the miracle, of Christ's stilling the storm at sea, by his word, *Matt. viii. 23, &c.* *He entered into a ship, and his disciples followed him: And behold a great storm arose at sea, so that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord save us: we are perishing. And Jesus saith to them: why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, he commanded the winds and the seas, and there came a great calm.* Christians, we are all embarked, as it were, in a ship, during our mortal life, in order to sail towards the haven of a blessed eternity. And for our comfort, we have on board with us, not only the disciples of Christ, that is, the pastors of the church, the successors of the apostles, but also our Lord himself, according to his promise, *Mat. xxviii. 20. Lo I am with you all days, even till the end of the world.* In this voyage, we are often exposed to storms, which threaten sometimes the whole church; as in cases of grievous persecutions, heresies, or other more general evils; at other times endanger particulars, as in cases of temptations and tribulations; from which, more or less, no one can expect to be exempted, in the midst of the winds and waves of the boisterous ocean of this world. But we have Christ on board with us; and therefore we have nothing to fear, if we will but have proper recourse to him; with a lively faith and confidence in him. And though he oftentimes seems to sleep, and defers his aid, for a trial of our faith, and to make us more sensible of the necessity we have of him, and more earnest in praying to him; he will not fail, in his good time (if we continue, like the disciples, calling out to him, *Lord save us, we are perishing*) to rise up, and to command the winds and the sea, and restore a calm.

Consider

Consider 2dly, the lessons we are also to learn from the miracles of our Saviour's feeding, at one time, five thousand men with five loaves, and at another time, four thousand, with seven loaves. Our Lord himself has taught us, upon occasion of the former of these miracles, *John vi. 26, 27.* that we are not to seek, or to follow him, for the sake of *the loaves*, that is, for procuring a corporal livelihood, or any temporal advantage; for this would be but catching at the shadow, and losing the substance: that *we are not to labour for the meat that perisheth: but for that, faith he, which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you.* So that the great lesson he would have us to learn from his feeding the multitudes; is, that we should have recourse to him, for the food and nourishment of our souls, unto everlasting life: for that he himself is the living, and life-giving bread; which without any consumption or diminution, *he distributes to all those who come to him; seeking from him the refreshment of their souls: either by communicating himself to them really in the holy sacrament, or spiritually, by a communion of faith, and love.*

Consider 3dly, in these miracles of our Lord's feeding the multitudes, what other lessons may be learnt from the circumstances, in which he wrought these wonders. *I have compassion, said he, on the multitude; for behold, they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint in the way, for some of them come from afar off, Mark viii. 2, 3.* The people, whom he favoured with these miracles, had followed him into the desert; they had preferred the attending upon him, and the hearing his divine word, before all other occupations, or recreations: they had continued with him for three whole days, without taking any thought for their bodily nourishment: and therefore our Lord, after feeding their souls with the word of life, and healing all that stood in need of cure; was pleased to provide also for their corporal sustenance; according

according to what he promised, *Mat. vi. 33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things* (that is, meat, drink, and cloaths) *shall be added unto you.* Learn from hence, Christians, what wonders your Saviour is disposed to work in favour of those that follow him into the wilderness, by a spiritual retreat, that is, by retiring from the noise and hurry of the world, to attend upon him; that are not quickly wearied with his company; but continue diligently with him (notwithstanding the difficulties, and oppositions they meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil) and that gladly hearken to his divine word. O such as these will not fail of being refreshed by him.

Conclude to follow Christ into the wilderness; by making at least a little wilderness for him, in thy own soul; and there frequently attending upon him by recollection and mental prayer: and assure thyself that he will never send thee away fasting; but will have compassion on thee, and frequently feed thee with his hidden manna, lest thou faint in the way; for thou hast as yet a great way to go, before thou canst reach thy eternal home.

DECEM. 6. *On the lessons that are to be learnt from other miracles of our Lord.*

CONSIDER first, that the miracles of our Lord were generally wrought, in favour of such as applied to him, with a lively faith, and profound humility; or by the means of earnest prayer: to teach us the great efficacy of faith, of humility, and of fervent prayer; and to encourage us to seek the cure of our souls, with the like dispositions. Thus the woman, that had laboured for twelve years under the issue of blood; humbly coming behind our Lord in the crowd, and touching the hem of his garment, was instantly healed, in reward of her faith: as our Lord himself assured her, *Luke viii. 48.* Thus the centurion, by his

his faith, and humility, obtained of our Lord the immediate cure of his servant; by those words: *Lord I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof: speak only the word, and my servant shall be healed* Matt. viii.

8. Thus the woman of Canaan, by her pious importunity, accompanied with the like faith, and humility, obtained the cure of her daughter, *Mat. xv. 28*. And so in many other cases. Whilst at other times, those that have only presented themselves before our Saviour, without presuming either to touch him, or his garments; or even so much as to speak to him; by the silent eloquence of their humility, have obtained their cure: as in the case of the man that had the dropsy, *Luke xiv.* O let us learn this kind of eloquence!

Consider 2dly, the particular lessons we may learn, from the miraculous cure of the paralytick (*Mat. ix.* and *Luke v.*) Our Lord was teaching in a house, surrounded with a great crowd of people, so that there was no coming in through the door: when behold men brought in a bed a man that had the palsy, desiring to present him before him: but not finding by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude; they went up upon the roof of the house, which was flat; and uncovering it, let him down, through the tiles with his bed, by ropes, into the midst, before Jesus. See here what pains were taken by these men, to come at the heavenly physician, from whom they expected the cure of their friend. Who would have thought of mens going up to the roof of another persons house, and uncovering it; and letting down a sick man in a bed, over the heads of a crowd? Nothing but a strong faith on the one hand, and an earnest desire of a cure on the other, could ever have suggested such an extraordinary proceeding: which loudly condemns the indolence, or indifference of so many Christians now a-days, who lying ill of a spiritual palsy, which disables them in all their limbs, and threatens them with the approaches of an everlasting death: suffer themselves to be kept off from Christ, by every trifling

trifling obstacle, or apprehension of difficulty. O Christians, where is your faith? Where is your concern for eternity? Why will you not be much more solicitous about the health and welfare of your immortal souls, than about these worldly toys, or these carcases of yours, that must quickly be the food of worms?

Consider 3dly, how our Lord, upon this occasion, was pleased to begin the cure of the sick man, by first healing his soul from sin: *Son, said he, thy sins are forgiven thee:* to give us to understand, that our corporal maladies are oftentimes sent in punishment of our sins: and that the first thing we have to do, when visited with sickness, is to apply for the remission of our sins, by repentance and confession: and then we may expect, that the scourge may be removed, when the cause is removed. The Scribes and Pharisees took occasion from those words of our Saviour, to charge him with blasphemy, in their minds: but he who knew their secret thoughts, publickly confuted them, by working so great and evident a miracle, in proof of his power of forgiving sins, as to restore, upon the spot, both health and strength to the man sick of the palsey, with those only words: *Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house:* upon which the paralytick *immediately rising up before them, took up the bed on which he lay, and went away to his own house, glorifying God.* See here, my soul, that thou hast a physician, in the person of thy Redeemer, who is both able, and willing to heal all thy infirmities: but see also that he expects of all such as apply to him for their cure, that they should lie no longer in their beds, by continuing on in the habits or immediate occasions of their sins; but that they should arise without delay; and take up their beds, by bearing with courage, the labours and conflicts of a penitential life; and should make the best of their way, by the exercises of solid virtue, to their true home; glorifying, all the way they go, both by their words, and by their lives, their great deliverer.

Conclude to spare no pains to come to Christ in order to be healed by him of all thy spiritual diseases: but

but remember to carry along with thee a lively faith and a profound humility: these will not fail of introducing thee to him, and obtaining of him all thou desirest.

DECEM. 7. *On our Lord's giving sight to the blind; and raising the dead to life.*

CONSIDER first, that our Lord, during his mortal life, often restored the sight of the light of this world, to them that were corporally blind; but oftner by far, both then, and ever since, has by his great mercy opened the eyes of them, that were spiritually blind, to see the light of God, and his eternal truths. He gave sight to him that was *born blind*, (John ix.) by spreading clay upon his eyes; and ordering him to wash in the pool of *Siloe* (which is interpreted *sent*): to instruct us, that we, who according to the soul, are all born blind, by original sin; must have our eyes opened to the light of truth, by the application of this mystical clay, of self-knowledge, to our inward eyes; and by being washed in him, who was *sent* from God, to be the *true light of the world*. In the supplication we make to him, for obtaining the sight of this divine light, we must, like the blind men of Jericho, shew ourselves quite in earnest, by the fervour and importunity of our prayer; and not be discouraged by the opposition we meet with from the crowd of distractions, &c. that rebukes us, as it were, and seeks to stop our mouths; but cry out so much the more for mercy, even as they did, *Matt. xx. 31*: and our Lord will not fail to shew us the mercy we call for, and to enlighten the eyes of our souls.

Consider 2dly, that in the gospel we read of three, whom our Saviour raised from death to life: one was the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a girl of twelve years old; another was a young man, the son of a widow of the city of Naim; the third was Lazarus of Bethania, the brother of Martha and Mary.

Mary. The first was but just then dead; and was raised to life by our Lord with two words: *Talitha cumi*; that is, *girl arise*. The second was carried out in order to be buried; and for the raising of him to life, something more was done: for our Lord came near, and touched the bier, and stopped them that carried it: and then said to the deceased, *young man, I say to thee arise: and he that was dead sat up and began to speak, &c.* But Lazarus had been dead, and buried four days; and before our Lord restored him to life, we read, *John xi.* that *he groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself*, verse 33, that he went to the sepulchre, and *wept*; verse 34, 35: that *he groaned again in himself*, and ordered the stone to be taken away, verse 38, 39: that *he lifted up his eyes to heaven*, and prayed to his Father; and then *cried, with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth*, verse 41, 42, 43. The first of these represents such souls as have but just now fallen into sin; who by a timely and fervent application to our Lord, who alone can raise the dead to life, may more easily be recovered, out of the jaws of death and hell, and brought back to the life of grace. The second represents such souls as are not only fallen into the death of sin; but are already laid upon the bier, and carried towards the sepulchre of a sinful habit, by repeated acts of sin. For the raising of these to life, stronger graces are required; signified by our Lord's touching the bier, and causing the bearers of it, that is the criminal passions, which are hurrying the poor sinner to his grave, to stop and stand still. But Lazarus represents the more dismal condition of such as are already buried, in inveterate habits of mortal sin: whose case requires still more extraordinary graces, signified by the tears, groans, prayers, and the loud cry of the Son of God. O! Christians let us dread the death of sin above all other evils; but much more the being buried in the grave of sinful habits; from which we shall not be raised again, without a greater miracle, than even that by which Lazarus was called out of his monument. And who shall

dare to be so presumptuous, as to go on in his sins flattering himself with the expectation of such a miracle being wrought in his favour?

Consider 3dly, that in these miracles wrought by our Lord, in raising the dead to life, we find he was pleased to let himself be moved by the tears of the living, as in the case of the widow's son, and of Lazarus: to encourage us, to present to him our prayers and tears, for poor sinners, dead and buried in sin; with an humble confidence, that in his great mercy, he will have pity on them, (who alas! have no pity on themselves) and restore them to life. O what a happiness will it be for a Christian to be instrumental, in this manner, in bringing back any one from death to life! how agreeable will such prayers and tears, be to our good Lord, which deliver a soul from sin and hell: and how beneficial to ourselves, in covering a multitude of our sins! But mark well the care our Lord took, for the future well-being of those whom he raised to life. He ordered that *they should give to eat*, to the daughter of Jairus, as soon as her soul was returned into her body, *Luke viii. 55*: to signify, that the sovereign means to keep her soul in life, and to recover her strength and health, is a frequent and worthy participation of the blessed sacrament. He had no sooner given life to the widow's son, in consideration of her tears, but he *delivered him to his mother*, *Luke vii. 15*: to signify the special care he expects from the church, the common mother of all the faithful, of all those her children, whom by his grace he brings back from the death of sin, at the intercession of her prayers and tears. And with regard to Lazarus, whom he called out of his monument, *bound feet and hands with winding bands*, &c. he immediately ordered, that they should *loose him, and let him go*, *John xi. 44*: to signify the necessity of discharging the bands of the affections and occasions of sin; in order to maintain in a new life, such as were buried a little while before in bad habits; and to the end they may be qualified henceforward to

go;

go; that is, to begin, and to continue the great journey, they are to make, to the mountain of eternity.

Conclude, from the consideration of these miracles of our Saviour, to have recourse to him, on all occasions, with an humble confidence in his mercy and goodness, for obtaining light, life, and all other good, both for thyself and thy neighbours. Thou canst not do him a greater pleasure; nor thyself a greater service.

DECEMB. 8. *On the Conception of the Blessed Virgin.*

CONSIDER first, how man, who was originally created in justice and sanctity; to be happy here in grace and innocence, and eternally happy hereafter in the enjoyment of his Creator; having wretchedly fallen from God by sin, and forfeited his original justice, with all the advantages annexed to it; and incurred at the same time, all kind of miseries, both for time and eternity; out of which it was not in his power to extricate himself, by any thing that he could do of himself; the infinite goodness of God, out of pure pity and compassion, was pleased to decree that his own eternal Son should come down from heaven, to be our Saviour; to redeem us from all our sins, with his most precious blood; to bring along with him mercy, grace and salvation to us, and by his death to open to us the gates of everlasting life. O Christians, it is this infinite goodness of our God that we must never forget. It calls aloud for all the return, we are able to make, of love and gratitude, of adoration, praise and glory; and of a total dedication of our whole being to the service of our great deliverer, for all our time, and for all eternity. O may all heaven and earth, with all the Angels, and Saints, bless and glorify his name for endless ages, for all these wonders of his mercy, bounty and love for us.

Consider 2dly, that God having thus decreed to give us his only Son for our Saviour, was pleased to reveal

veal this great mystery, from the very beginning to our first parents; and afterwards from time to time to the patriarchs and prophets, and others his servants: to the end that this might be in all ages the capital object of the faith of all true believers; and that as none could ever attain to eternal salvation, but through the merits of the Son of God made man for us, so all might approach to God, for mercy and grace, through faith in him. In the mean time the divine wisdom, which had created the world in six days, was pleased to employ full four thousand yerrs in preparing the world for this great Redeemer. All the most remarkable passages of sacred history, recorded in holy writ, have all some relation to him, or his church: all the most eminent servants of God, and deliverers of his people, were so many figures and forerunners of him: the whole law, with all its sacrifices and ceremonies, alluded to him, and to the great sacrifice he was to offer: the writings of the prophets, and of the psalms, are full of him. Now when the time of his coming drew near, God who had done great things, long before, for the whole people of the Hebrews in general, and for that family in particular, of which he would have his Son to be born into the world; was pleased to do still greater things, in favour of her, whom he had chosen, in his eternal decrees, to bring forth this Lord of glory and Saviour of the world. These great things wrought for her, even in her very conception, we celebrate in the festival of this day: to glorify him that wrought them; and to honour her, for whom they were wrought. Our Lord in taking her for his mother, and us for his brethren; has authorized us to consider her as our mother also, to have recourse to her as such; and to rejoice in all her advantages. We cannot love the Son of God, and be indifferent in what relates to the honour of his mother.

Consider 3dly, that the Son of God, making choice of this blessed Virgin to be his mother, was pleased to prepare her for this near alliance with him, by that

ex-

extraordinary grace, of keeping her ever *pure* from sin; either original or actual, mortal or venial: for so it was becoming, that she who was to bear in her womb, and to bring forth to the world *purity* itself, should never be defiled with any spot or stain of sin. Learn from hence, Christian souls, the care you ought to take, to keep yourselves *pure*, if you hope to be agreeable to the eyes of this same Lord. Learn to *purify* yourselves, from all sin, as often as you approach to him, to receive him in the sacred mysteries. And as the particular devotion of this holy time of Advent should be, to prepare yourselves in such manner for worthily celebrating the birth of Christ, that you may also be partakers in this great mystery, by his coming to you, and being spiritually born in you; see you make it your busines now to dispose yourselves for so great a happiness, by purifying yourselves from *all defilement of the flesh, and of the spirit*, and thus preparing a proper place within you, for the Lord of glory to be born in.

Conclude to honour the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, by a perpetual love of purity, in all its branches; and an imitation of her purity, as far as thy frailty and corruption will admit of: thus mayest thou hope that the fountain of all purity will come also to thee, and be spiritually born in thee.

DECEM. 9. *On the purity with which we are to prepare our souls for Christ.*

CONSIDER first, that he who prepared the Blessed Virgin, to be the mother of his Son, by this early care to keep her pure in her very conception, would thereby give us to understand, what dispositions he expects in us, in order to our being also qualified, for the spiritual conception and birth of the same Lord in our souls. For as we could never have been happy, if the Son of God had not been born into this world for us: so we never can be happy, if he be not also

spiritually conceived and born in us. No, my soul, we must put off the old man, and put on the new, which is Jesus Christ, before we can come to God; and this putting on the new man must be effected by his being spiritually conceived and born in our souls. Now he can never come to any soul, to be spiritually conceived or born there, if that soul be not clean: for though he humbled himself so far as to be born in a poor stable; yet he will not be born in an unclean soul; because such a soul is the habitation of unclean spirits, and therefore cannot be a proper place for his spiritual birth. It is then by cleanness of conscience and purity, we must *prepare the way of the Lord*, if we hope to have a share in the happiness he offers us, by his incarnation and birth: without this, his coming will be to our condemnation.

Consider 2dly, that this cleanness and purity, which is indispensably necessary for the spiritual conception and birth of Christ in our souls, must be, at least, from all wilful and deadly sin. For wherever wilful and deadly sin resides, there is the seat of Satan; there he resides and reigns: and consequently there can be no room for the birth of Christ, in such a soul. So that the first and most essential branch of Christian purity, without which *God has no part in us* (Job xxx. 2.) and we have no part in him, is a purity of conscience, at least from mortal sin; joined with a fixed determination of the soul, for no consideration whatsoever, for no honour, interest, or pleasure; for no fear, or love, or human respect; for no promises, or allurements, on the one hand, or terrors, and threats on the other; in fine for nothing that the world can either give or take away, ever to consent, so much as in thought, to any such sin. Christians, what are your dispositions in this regard? Are your consciences either pure from all deadly sin by innocence, or cleansed by penitence? Are your souls in a proper condition to welcome Christ? Are you in a settled resolution to give up the dominion of your souls, to this great King, who

who desires to be born there, and to live there? Are you willing to sacrifice to his will and pleasure all other loves that offer to oppose his reign, so as to be ready to part even with life itself, rather than with your allegiance to him? This is the *purity* of conscience he absolutely insists upon, and nothing less will satisfy him. If you are not in this disposition, you are none of his: and he will not be born in you.

Consider 3dly, that to welcome Christ, in a suitable manner, you must not content yourselves with having your consciences only cleansed from all mortal sin; or your souls only settled in a resolution, of never more being guilty, upon any consideration, of such sins, as may eternally separate you from your God, and cast you into hell. This is but a low degree of Christian purity: and those that aim no higher are in great danger of not even arriving so far. To make light of smaller sins; to be indifferent about Christian perfection; to pretend to no more than the avoiding hell; to indulge one's self in a negligent lukewarm way of living, and in a variety of evil habits, and known sins, which one is willing to suppose are only venial, with little or no concern about the offence we commit against God; or any serious thought of amendment; so far from being a proper disposition, to prepare the soul for the spiritual birth of Christ, is indeed the broad road to mortal sin; and too often ends in hell. A generous Christian, and one that is a true lover of his God, does not stand to enquire, whether the doing this, or that, will send his soul to hell, or no? It is enough to determine him, to avoid it with all his power, to know, that it offends his God; whom he loves with his whole heart: and therefore he dreads more the doing any thing, that is displeasing in his eyes, than either death, or hell itself. My soul, are these thy dispositions?

Conclude to make it thy business, now at least, to labour for this perfect purity of conscience, not only from all deadly sin; but also from all known deliberate venial

venial sins; and much more from indulging thyself in the habit of any such sin. For how canst thou expect that infinite purity should be willing to take up his abode, in thy soul, if thou art not careful to keep it clean, at least from all wilful and affected stains?

DECEM. 10. *On purifying the interior powers of the soul.*

CONSIDER first, that as this spiritual conception and birth of Christ is to be perfected in our interior; so in order to dispose ourselves effectually for so great a happiness; and that it may continue with us unto life everlasting; by our abiding always in Christ, and Christ's abiding always in us; we must be ever jealous of the purity of the interior powers of the soul. *All the glory of the king's daughter (the Christian soul) is within*, Ps. xliv: there, is to be the residence of the Lord of glory: the beauty of the interior is to attract him thither: and this beauty depends upon keeping these inward powers of the soul in a proper state of purity. See then, Christians, if you desire to have Christ with you, that you take proper care. (1) To purify your *understanding*, from all its errors, false opinions, and affected ignorances; by obliging it to open its eyes to the light of divine truths, in the exercise of meditation and mental prayer. (2) To purify your *memory*, from all its impertinent amusements, distractions and evaginations; by accustoming it to the remembrance of God, and a recollection of thought. (3) To purify your *will*, from all its disorderly affections; by fixing your heart upon solid and eternal goods, but especially upon your sovereign good, which is God himself. Thus shall your whole souls be agreeable to him.

Consider 2dly, that one of the greatest enemies to this interior purity (which is so necessary to bring Christ into our souls, and to fix him there) is that unhappy dissipation of mind, in which many Christians pass

pass their days; always thinking, but very seldom thinking on any thing to the purpose. Alas! it is too true, that the minds of the generality of men are a constant thoroughfare, of vain amusements, of empty, idle, impertinent thoughts, succeeding one another, all the day long, and leaving little or no room for God, or the things of God and the soul, to come in, or to make any lasting impression. Thus the inward castle is left quite unguarded; and the enemy has free access, to come and rifle, and even murder the soul at pleasure, by suggesting a variety of criminal thoughts, which are admitted without resistance, through the supine carelessness, and licentiousness of the mind: whilst on the other hand, the divine grace is shut out from such souls; by their whole attention being engaged by these toys and trifles: so that when God would come, and would visit them, they are not at home for him; but are gone gadding abroad after other impertinencies. See, my soul, if this be not thy case. And if it be, seek a remedy without delay, or there will be no room for Christ in thee. Now the only remedy is a recollection of spirit, and an attention to God, in all thy ordinary actions and employments.

Consider 3dly, that if it be so necessary, in order to conceive, and to bring forth Christ in thy interior: to maintain the *purity of thy mind*, by recollection of thought; it must be no less necessary, to maintain also the *purity of thy heart*, by banishing from thence all disorderly affections: for these are no less apt to disqualify the soul for this spiritual conception and birth of Christ in her; they are no less unclean and disagreeable in his eyes: and no less opposite to his reign. Neither can the *purity* of the mind and of the thought be maintained, without the *purity* of the affection and of the heart: for the mind and the thought, are generally bent upon such objects as the heart affects: we think most upon what we love most: and therefore if the affections of our heart are *impure*, our thoughts will also be *impure*: for where our treasure is, there both

both our hearts and our thoughts will be. Now that love alone is *pure*, which makes God its *treasure*: and all such affections are *impure*, as take off the heart from God, and make it seek its *treasure* in something that is not God: or which at least divide the heart between God and the creature. And these are the disorderly affections, which must be banished, in order to dispose the soul for Christ.

Conclude to examine well, and to set thy interior in order, particularly with regard to these two branches of purity: *viz.* the purity of the mind, and the purity of the heart. For Christ will not come to be spiritually born in any soul, or to make his abode in any soul, where he is not allowed to be sole master, both of the mind, and of the heart. Therefore the mind must be set free from the servitude of useless thoughts and impertinent amusements; and the heart from the servitude of misplaced affections, and every fond, sensual, worldly, or distracting love; to make place for the birth of Christ, and his reign in the soul. The soul that desires to have Christ with her, must endeavour to be like the spouse in the canticles, *a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up*. Dissipation of thought, and all disorderly affections, bring such company into the soul, as the Son of God will not endure.

DECEM. 11. *On the purity of our actions.*

CONSIDER first, that this Christian purity, which is to prepare the way for Christ in us, and to dispose us to give him a proper entertainment, must not be confined to the interior powers of the soul; but ought to extend itself also to the whole body of our actions. As the tree ought to be pure, so ought the fruits also: for the tree is known by its fruits. Now our fruits are our actions; so that these must be pure; or else we shall not be pure; nor duly qualified for that happy union with Christ, which we are to aspire to,

to, at this approaching solemnity: for that which is impure cannot be in a proper condition to be united with the sovereign purity. Now for our actions to be *pure*, it is not enough that what we do be good in itself; it must also be good in all its circumstances: for any one vicious circumstance is enough to corrupt the whole. But that on which the *purity of our actions* principally depends, is the *purity of our intention*: according to that of the Gospel, *Matt. vi. 22, 23.* *If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome: but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome.* For the eye of the soul is the intention: which is then single, when the view of the soul is carried towards God, in all that she does; but when the intention is turned off from God, and looks at something else, the eye is *evil*, and the work is *darksome*.

Consider 2dly, that all Christian virtue depends upon this purity of intention: the meanest of our actions are ennobled by it: and the highest, and the most esteemed by men, are good for nothing in the sight of God, without it. Now the perfection of this purity of intention is to act in all things from the motive of the love of God; for the greater glory of God; and in conformity to the will of God. This carries the soul up to God, and brings down God to the soul: this produces a happy union of the soul with her God. Christians, see here the shortest way to all good, and the sovereign means of arriving at the height of perfection. The practice of this requires, (1.) That you should begin all your days, and all your works, with God; by offering them all up to him, and to his service. (2.) That you should consult his divine will in all things, and make it the rule of all you do. (3.) That you should watch over yourselves, both in the beginning, and in the progress of every work you take in hand, that you may exclude all by-motives, suggested by your self-love, human respects, interest, pleasure, or passion. (4.) That you should often renew the directing of your intention to God; and should endeavour

endeavour to season all your ordinary actions, and employments, with frequent aspirations, or breathings of the soul, towards him.

Consider 3dly, that the two capital enemies of purity of intention, and which spiritual persons in particular have most occasion to guard against, are vain-glory and pride. The difference between the two is, that *vain-glory* consists in loving, and desiring, to be esteemed by others; whereas *pride* consists in a vain esteem of one's self: *vain-glory* makes persons ever turn their eye upon what others will say, or think, of their words, or actions; it makes them perfect idolaters of the point of honour, of the esteem, reputation, and approbation of the world: but *pride* makes them full of themselves; measuring, as it were, themselves on every occasion, and their performances, with those of others, and still giving themselves the preference before others; ever turning their eye upon their own excellence; building on their own lights, resolutions, strength, or capacity; and taking a secret complacency in themselves, in all the good they do. Both the one and the other are infinitely pernicious to the soul, by turning off her eye from God; and consequently robbing her of all the fruit of her good works, and making them all rotten at heart, and good for nothing in the sight of God: they even pervert the best of her performances, to her eternal condemnation, by shutting out God from them, and giving the preference to these devils of pride, and *vain-glory*, before him. As long as these have possession of the soul, there will be nothing but corruption there, and no room for the spiritual birth of Christ.

Concide to aim, at all times, at a purity in all thy actions; by purifying thy intention from all pride, and *vain-glory*; and from every other thing, that may turn off thy eye from God. Let God be the beginning, and end of all thou dost; and take care to give to every action its full perfection; by doing all for God's greater glory, and out of the pure motive of his

his divine love: and the very meanest of thy daily actions will suffice to make thee a Saint. Whereas neither long prayers, nor large alms, nor converting millions of souls, nor working miracles; nor giving thy body to the flames, will avail thee any thing; if thy intention be vitiated with pride or vain-glory.

DECEM. 12. *On the Angelical Salutation.*

CONSIDER first, that after the Blessed Virgin had been prepared, by the purity of her conception, and by the purity of her life; by the purity of her soul, and of her body; of her heart, and of her mind; and of all her actions, and intentions; to conceive in her sacred womb the Son of God, whom she had long before conceived in her soul: the time appointed by our Lord being now come, the Archangel Gabriel was sent to her from heaven, upon the most solemn embassage that ever was: *viz.* to treat with this most humble maid, concerning the great work of the Incarnation of the eternal Word; by his taking flesh of her: in order to the redemption of mankind, from Satan, sin and hell; and reconciliation with God; and in order to the establishment of a new law, a new and everlasting covenant; a kingdom of heaven upon earth, by grace, in favour of all that should embrace this grace; and an eternal kingdom for them, hereafter in glory. But give ear now, my soul, to the Angel's address, and mark every word of it. *The Angel being come in, said to her: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women,* Luke i. 28. He greeted her with the word *Ave* or *hail*; a word of salutation, and congratulation with her, for all that God had done, and was about to do in her favour, and for his choosing her to be the happy instrument, that should give birth to the source of all our good. O let heaven and earth join in this *Ave*, of salutation and congratulation: as all heaven and earth are highly interested in the issue of this most sacred negotiation,

which is to bring us innumerable benefits, both for time and eternity, by the Incarnation of the Son of God. And see, my soul, thou never forget to testify thy grateful sense of the share designed for thee in these graces and benedictions, by daily joining, with suitable devotion, in this holy salutation and congratulation, as often as thou repeatest the *Ave Maria*.

Consider 2dly, how the Angel, in his salutation, stiles the Blessed Virgin *full of grace*; to signify the supereminent degree of divine grace, to which God elevated her soul, to prepare her to be the mother of his Son. For she was *full* of all that habitual *grace*, which justifies and sanctifies the soul: *full* of faith, and hope: *full* of divine charity, in both its branches; ever loving God, with her whole heart, with her whole soul, with all her mind, and with all her strength, and loving her neighbour as herself: she was *full* of humility, meekness, patience, obedience, and all other moral virtues: she was *full* of wisdom, godliness, the fear of the Lord, and all other gifts, and fruits of the Holy Spirit: her memory was *full* of holy thoughts; her understanding with the lights of God, and divine truths; and her will with most fervent acts and affections of love, zeal, desire of the glory of God, of the coming of the Messias, and of the redemption of the world. She was *full of grace* in all her thoughts, words and works: her *works* were all *full*, by the purity of intention, the fervour and love, with which she performed them all. Many Saints have been *full of grace*; but none like this queen, and mother of all the Saints: whose grace was proportioned to the great designs, that God had upon her, and to the supereminent dignity, to which she was chosen, of being Mother of God. O congratulate, my soul, with the Blessed Virgin, for this her *fullness of grace*; which went on continually encreasing for the whole time of her life; by the good use she continually made of all God's gifts: and beg through her intercession thou mayest, like her, faithfully correspond

respond, and diligently co-operate with every divine grace.

Consider 3dly, how the Angel adds in his salutation, *the Lord is with thee*: to signify the source, from which all her fulness of grace flowed; and the extraordinary manner of God's communicating himself, and all his graces, to this most highly favoured of all his creatures. For our Lord was not only with the Blessed Virgin, by his essence, his presence and his power, as he is with all men; nor only by his sanctifying grace, as he is with all the just; but in a most extraordinary manner, by a far more eminent grace, a closer union, and an higher sanctification. And therefore the Angel adds, *blessed art thou amongst women*; to express the supereminence of those graces and *benedictions*, with which she was *blessed* from heaven, and should still be *blessed*, more and more; as well as the innumerable *blessings*, that should be communicated to all mankind, through the fruit of her womb; and the *blessings* and praise that should on that account be given to her by all generations. For as one woman by disobedience, in hearkening to the suggestions of the infernal serpent, was the beginning of all the maledictions, that fell upon all mankind; so one woman by her humble obedience to the proposals brought to her by an Angel from heaven, was the beginning of all the benedictions that were to come upon all mankind, from the blessed fruit of her womb: by whom also she crushed the serpents head: who first brought sin and death amongst us. O! see my soul, with what sentiments of devotion, thou oughtest to join with the Angel, and with the blessed St. Elizabeth, and with the whole church of God, in this solemn address of the Virgin Lady: *Blessed art thou amongst women: and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* Luke i. 24.

Conclude ever to keep up in thy soul a grateful remembrance of all the great things, that God has done, for the Blessed Virgin, and for us all, in the Incarnation

tion of his Son, by a frequent and devout repetition of the Angelical salutation: always concluding it with that pious address of the church. *Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.* Amen. O how just it is, that we should particularly crave the assistance of her prayers, for that critical time; when we can do the least for ourselves, and when all is at stake for eternity.

DECEM. 13. *On the wonders of God, in the Incarnation of his Son.*

CONSIDER first how after the Blessed Virgin's consent, and offering herself, with a profound humility, with an entire obedience, and a perfect conformity, to the sacred will of God; by those words: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word,* Luke i. 38: the greatest of all the wonders of God, and of all his works was immediately effected; Even a Man-God, the miracle of miracles. For a human body, perfect in all its parts, was formed in an instant by the Holy Ghost, out of the purest blood of the Blessed Virgin; and a most excellent rational soul was at the same time created; and this body and soul were joined with, and assumed by the eternal Word, the second person of the most adorable Trinity. Thus God was made man, and man was made God: and the Blessed Virgin was made mother of God. Thus in her womb was celebrated that sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God: to the feast of which we are all invited, *Matt. xxii:* Thus was our humanity exalted to the very highest elevation, by being united with, and subsisting by the person of the eternal Word, and we all in consequence of this elevation of our human nature have also been wonderfully dignified, and exalted, by being raised up to a kindred with the most high God; who, by taking to himself our nature, has made us all his brothers, and sisters: and

and by assuming our humanity, has made us, in some measure partakers of his divinity. O my soul stand thou astonished at these wonders; which will be a subject of the greatest astonishment, both to men and Angels, for all eternity! O admire and adore, praise and love, with all thy power, and with all thy affections, that infinite goodness, that has wrought all these wonders, out of love to thee!

Consider 2dly, the wonders of God, in all those graces, and excellencies, which he conferred on the soul of Christ, and on his sacred humanity, in the first instant of his conception; in consequence of its being united with the divine person. Graces and excellencies, which are all immense and incomprehensible; and which exceed, without any comparison, all the rest of the wondrous works of God, and all whatsoever he has done at any time in favour of any of his Saints, or of all of them put together, For God did not give to this his Son, his Spirit by measure (John iii. 34) as to the rest of his Saints; but gave all things into his hands: and of his fulness we all receive John i. 16, even all grace and truth; according to the measure of his giving it to us. Eph. iv. 7. Now these graces and excellencies we may reduce under the following heads. 1. An immense purity, from all manner of sin, or imperfection whatsoever: not as by privilege; but in his own right, as being the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world. 2. The grace of sanctity, incomparably exceeding that of all the Angels and Saints put together, from whence he is called the Holy of holies, Daniel ix, that is the Saint of Saints: the Spirit of God resting on him, with all his gifts, with an incomprehensible plenitude, Isai. xi. 2. 3. The grace of the beatific vision of the divine essence, and that in the most consummate degree; with proportionable love of the Deity, and joy in God. 4. All the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. 5. The power of working all kind of miracles, and of raising the dead to life, by his own will; with a general

command over all the elements, and over all nature. 6. The *power of excellency in forgiving sins*, converting sinners, changing their hearts, ordaining sacraments and sacrifices, and distributing amongst men graces, and supernatural gifts. 7. The grace of being the perpetual *head of the church*, both of heaven and earth : and the source of all blessings, gifts, and graces, that either have been, are at present, or shall at any time be bestowed, upon this his mystical body, or any of its members. O what subject have we here, my soul, to bless and praise the eternal Father, for all these excellent gifts and graces ; with which he has enriched his Son, the man Christ Jesus ! How ought we also to rejoice and congratulate with the sacred humanity of our Saviour on this occasion ; and to give thanks, without ceasing, for all that share or portion of divine grace, which from this overflowing fountain is continually derived on us !

Consider 3dly, in all these graces and excellencies, conferred on the humanity of Christ, in his incarnation, how that of the prophet was verified, *Isai. ix. 6, A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulders : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Councillor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace.* Yes, Christians, these great titles, here bestowed upon your Saviour, by the Spirit of God, abundantly declare, both the wonders, that God wrought for him ; and those which though his incarnation, he has wrought also for you ; in giving him to you : that he might be not only your Saviour, your redeemer, and your deliverer ; but also your king, your lawgiver, your teacher, your model, your advocate, your physician, your friend, your high-priest, and your victim, your father, and your head ; in a word, the source of all your good ; the way ; the truth and the life, in your regard ; by whom alone you can go to God. And do not all these great things, effected by the incarnation of the Son of God, shew forth the power the wisdom, the mercy and goodness of

of God, with all the other divine attributes, infinitely more, than any of the rest of the works of the Almighty?

Conclude to honour by a lively faith, by a serious and frequent meditation, and a sincere devotion, all these wonders of God, wrought in the incarnation of his Son; both in favour of him, and of us: and to lead henceforward such lives, as become those, who, by this mystery have been so highly exalted, and brought so near to the very source of all grace and sanctity.

DECEMBER 14. *On the glory of God, in the incarnation of his Son.*

CONSIDER first, how the Angels, upon occasion of the birth of Christ, sung forth that blessed hymn, recorded *Luke ii. 14. Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will*; to give us to understand, that the Incarnation and birth of the Son of God, was designed to produce those two principal fruits, the greater *glory* of God, and the *peace*, and reconciliation of man with God. The *glory* of God shines forth most brightly in the incarnation of his Son, by the manifestation of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his justice, and of his mercy; and by setting all these his divine attributes in their most beautiful light. The almighty power of God is here manifested, in all the wonders, he wrought in this mystery, and especially in that greatest and most glorious of all his wonderful productions *viz.* a *God-man*: a greater work, without comparison, than the creation of ten thousand worlds. The infinite wisdom of God is here manifested, in the contrivance of this wonderful way of uniting God and man, the Creator and the creature, which were at an infinite distance from each other, so closely together, as to be but one and the same person: and of reconciling, by this means, man, who who was fallen from God by sin, in such manner, as that without

his

his divine Majesty departing, in the least tittle, from what was due to the reparation of his glory; he should continually receive from this one man, for every moment of time and eternity, a homage of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and love, infinitely more glorious to the Deity; than all the homages of ten thousand worlds could be; though they were all full of angels and men eternally employed in nothing else but in glorifying God.

Consider 2dly, with relation to the other attributes of God; *viz.* his goodness, his mercy, and his justice; how brightly they also shine forth, in the incarnation of his Son: in which according to the psalmist (*Pf. Ixxiv.*) *Mercy and truth met each other: justice and peace have kissed.* The infinite goodness of God never manifested itself so clearly, as in giving his only Son to us, by the mystery of his incarnation, to deliver us from all our evils; and to bring with him all good to us, in order to make us happy for eternity. The infinite mercy of God, is set in no less clear a light, by this mystery; in his here furnishing us, out of pure compassion, without any regard at all to our merits, with such and so great a Redeemer, to be both our priest, and our sacrifice, for a propitiation for all our sins. And as to the infinite justice of God, so far from its being set aside in this mystery, or forgetting its right, it never exerted, or manifested itself more, than when it insisted upon such a satisfaction for sin, as could not be paid by any lesser or meaner person, than a God made man. So that the justice of God has been in effect more evidently demonstrated, by the incarnation of the Son of God, coming down here amongst us, to be made a bleeding victim for our sins; than by any other judgments or punishments whatsoever, that either have, or ever could be inflicted by the divine Majesty, either in time, or eternity, for the sins of men.

Consider 3dly, that the infinite dignity of the person of this God-man, as it gives an infinite dignity and worth to all his performances, even to every thought, word,

word, or action, and every suffering of his ; so it is an inexhaustible source, from which continually and eternally flows an infinite glory to God, from every thought, word, action, or suffering of his Son ; even from the moment of his conception, till his expiring upon the cross ; as well as to all that adoration, praise, glory, thanksgiving, &c. which as man, he shall present to his Father, for all eternity ! See then, my soul, how very much the incarnation of the Son of God, has advanced the glory of his Father since every motion of the heart of this God made man, gives in effect infinitely more glory to the Father, both in time and eternity, than all the adorations and praises of millions of Angels, and millions of worlds could ever have done, though eternally employed in nothing else, but in glorifying God. Besides all that glory, which the Son of God incarnate, has procured for his Father, by his gospel, by his worship, which he has established here upon earth ; by that great sacrifice of his body and blood, offered up daily on a million of altars, &c. and that kingdom of souls, which he has here purchased, to be delivered up hereafter to his Father, to glorify him for all eternity.

Conclude to rejoice in this great glory, which the Son of God has procured both for his Father, and for himself, by his Incarnation : and sing to him, with the Angels, hymns of perpetual praise for his having so well associated together, in this mystery, his own glory, with thy peace and salvation.

DECEM. 15. *On the glory the Son of God gave to his Father, in his mother's womb.*

CONSIDER first, that as the soul of Christ, from the first instant of his conception, by being assumed to the divine person of the Word, was full of all light and knowledge, and consequently enjoyed from the beginning the perfect use of reason, and understanding : so the inward powers and faculties of his soul,

soul, from the first instant of his conception, were always employed; they were never idle. Now as the great design of God, in the incarnation of his Son, was his own glory, and the redemption of man: so the continual occupation of the Son of God made man, was the procuring of his Father's glory, and man's salvation: from the very first moment, that his soul received a being, by creation, this was his perpetual employment. It was from the beginning the indispensable duty, both of angels and men, in their first creation, to turn themselves immediately to God; by adoration, oblation and love; and to dedicate themselves eternally to him and to his glory. The omission of this at first, was the cause of the condemnation of Lucifer and his companions: and the like omission is to this day, the cause of the condemnation of millions of men; who unhappily turn themselves away from God, for the sake of the creature. But the soul of Christ, our great deliverer, and our most perfect model and pattern, has taught us better things, by his nine months occupation in the Virgin's womb: where, silent as he is, he preaches to us admirable lessons, with regard to the glory we ought at all times to give to God.

Consider 2dly, that these lessons, which the Son of God teaches us, by his great example, in his mother's womb, are contained in the different acts of virtue, in which he there spent his time. He began, as we learn from the psalmist (*P. xxxix. 7, 8, 9.*) by offering himself to his Father, without reserve, to *do all his will*: he embraced this will in the midst of his heart: he substituted himself in the place of all the ancient sacrifices, to be the great *burnt-offering* and *sin-offering*, that should be immolated for God's glory, and for the expiation of the sins of the world: he presented his body just then formed by the Holy Ghost, with his ears pierced (as it was prescribed in the law, with relation to such as yielded themselves up to be servants for ever, *Deuteronomy xv. 17.*) To be intirely at the disposal

disposal of his Father, a perpetual servant, obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. O let us hear from himself these his dispositions, *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering, and sin-offering thou didst not require; then, said I, behold I come.* In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart. O, my soul, how happy shall we be, if we labour in good earnest to imitate these dispositions of our dear Jesus; by embracing like him the will of God and his holy law in the midst of our hearts; and offering ourselves, without reserve, to be at all times his devoted servants!

Consider 3dly, that infinite glory which our Lord gave to his Father all the time he was in his mother's womb: first by the acts of *adoration and homage*; which as man, he continually paid to God; perfectly annihilating himself in his sight; and continually bowing down all the powers of his soul, to offer him a most acceptable worship, worthy of his divine majesty: 2dly, by acts of *praise, and thanksgiving*, which he offered up both for himself, and for the whole creation: 3dly, by acts of *oblation, and eternal dedication* of himself to his Father; to be ever his, both in life, and death; both in time, and eternity: with a total consecration of his whole soul, and body; of his whole will, memory and understanding, of all his senses and faculties: and of all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to his divine service: by acts of a most pure and most perfect love, zeal, and desire, of ever promoting in all things, and above all things, the *sanctification of the name of God, the propagation of his kingdom, and the doing his will upon earth*, as it is in *heaven*. Such acts as these, joined with acts of charity, and prayer, for us poor sinners, were the perpetual occupation of Christ our Lord, in his mother's womb. A happy employment indeed, and most worthy of our imitation at all times!

Conclude

Conclude to embrace, and to follow in the practice of thy life, these heavenly lessons which the Son of God teaches thee by his divine example from his mother's womb: no other exercises can be either more agreeable to him, or to his Father; or more advantageous to thyself.

DECEM. 16. *On the charity of the Son of God for us, in his mother's womb.*

CONSIDER first, that as the soul of the Son of God, from the first instant of his conception in his mother's womb, was ever employed in the love of his heavenly Father, and in a perpetual adoration, and oblation of himself to his most holy will; so for the love of his Father, and in consequence of his holy will, he was also employed from the beginning in the love of us, and in the perpetual exercises of an unbounded charity, in our regard. His soul, in the instant it received a being, was assumed to the divine person of the Word; and in the light of this eternal Word clearly saw, readily submitted to, lovingly embraced, with an *Ecce venio, Behold I come*, that most sacred and adorable decree of the whole blessed Trinity, by which it was ordained that the Son of God should become man, for the reparation of the honour, and glory of God, infinitely injured; and outraged by man: and that he should be the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind: that he should take upon him all their sins, to be cancelled with his blood: that by his death, he should rescue them from the tyranny of Satan and sin, and a second and everlasting death; and should open in their favour the gates of mercy, grace, and salvation: in a word that he should be the great mediator of God and men; their high-priest and victim. In consequence of, and in obedience to, this heavenly decree, he immediately began, from the first instant of his conception, to exercise himself in all such acts of charity for us, as were

were agreeable to this his office of our Saviour and mediator, which he ever joined with a perpetual attention to his Father's glory. This was his continual employment in his mother's womb, this was his continual employment all the time of his life. O let all heaven, and earth, eternally acknowledge, praise, and bless, this his infinite charity!

Consider 3dly, what these acts of charity were, which the Son of God continually exercised in our regard, from the first instant of his conception. 1. He had us always before his eyes, and in the midst of his heart; he was not one moment without thinking of us. 2. He was perpetually praying for us, that we might be delivered from all our evils, and brought through him, to all good. 3. He had a most tender compassion for all our miseries, considering us all as his brethren; and he continually bewailed our sins. 4. He offered himself without ceasing, to the justice of his Father, to suffer all that he pleased for the expiation of our sins: he had even a longing desire (such was the excess of his love) for the accomplishment of that baptism, with which he was to be one day baptized, in his blood; because thereby he was to redeem us from our sins. See, my soul, how very early our dear Jesus began to shew himself a Jesus, that is a *Saviour*, to us. See how affectionately, and effectually too he has loved us, even from his first conception in his mother's womb. And have we hitherto been sensible of these wonders of his love for us? Have we ever yet given him a proper place in our heart, who has been so much beforehand with us, as to admit us, from the beginning, into the center of his? O let us detest our past ingratitude in this regard; and henceforward at least yield ourselves up without reserve captives to his love!

Consider 3dly, in particular, the sentiments which the soul of our blessed Saviour had, with regard to our sins, and in what manner he was affected by them, even from his first conception. He had even then a

clear sight, and a most lively sense of all the sins of the whole world, from the first to the last. He saw them all, in the light of God, with all their aggravations, and all their deformity, and infinite malice, from their opposition to the infinite goodness of God. He saw the outrages they all offered to the divine majesty: and how odious they were all in his eyes. And he saw at the same time all the havock they made in the souls of men, made after God's own image and likeness, and all their dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity. But O what tongue can express, or heart conceive how strangely his soul was affected with this sight? His love for his heavenly Father, on the one hand, and his zeal for his glory, gave him an inexpressible hatred and horror, for all these enemies of God, these high treasons against the divine majesty. And again, his love for us, and concern for our salvation, on the other hand, filled him with more than mortal grief, and anguish, for the general corruption with which he saw the whole world infected, and the loss of so many millions of souls. His horror and hatred for our sins was equal to the love he bore to his Father: and his grief and anguish, which he continually endured for them, was equal to his love for us; even that love which made him give himself up to the worst of deaths, to cancel our sins, with his own blood. Thus between the love of his Father, and the love of us, the Son of God lived in a state of continual suffering, even in his mother's womb; and of such bitter sufferings, as nothing but his love could have endured. O Christians, learn here from your dear Redeemer, in what manner you ought to be affected with the thought of your sins! *Learn to hate*, and detest them above all things, as enemies of your God; learn to hate and to detest them, as your mortal enemies; and to bewail them all your life time.

Conclude to embrace the divine charity of the Son of God, with all the affection of your soul, which has thus exerted itself, even from his mother's womb,

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in favour of you. But remember that he expects of you a continual return of love, and this, with your whole heart: and that nothing less will content him.

DECEM. 17. *On the benefits, which the Son of God brings to us by his incarnation.*

CONSIDER first, that man in his first creation was highly favoured by his maker, and elevated by him to a supernatural end; he was enriched with the treasures of original grace, justice, and sanctity; and destined to an eternal life with the living God: in the mean time he was placed in the earthly paradise, as in a shadow of that happy life, where, if he had kept the law of his great creator, he might have fed upon the tree of life; and so have passed to a better paradise of a true and everlasting life; without going through the gate of death. But alas! by falling from his God by sin, he forfeited all these treasures, and all these advantages: he was stript at once of all the goods of grace; he was strangely wounded in all the powers and faculties of his soul; his understanding was overclouded with ignorance, and deluded with a variety of errors; his memory and imagination was distracted with empty toys, and vanities, and hurried away from the remembrance of his God; his will was perverted with malice; his inferior appetite disordered with rebellious passions; and his whole soul became weak, beyond expression, to every thing of good, and strongly bent upon all evil. Thus had unhappy man, by his apostacy from God, lost both his God, and all his good; and had incurred all kind of evils, both of soul and body, for time and eternity: thus in losing his God, he had fallen into the hands of four merciless enemies, sin, and Satan; death, and hell. Now the Son of God, by his incarnation, came down amongst us in order to deliver us from all these evils, which we had incurred by sin; to reconcile us to our God, and to restore us, with infinite advantage, to all that good, for which we

were at first created. What reasons then have we, my soul, to rejoice in this incarnation of the Son of God, the sovereign means of all our good, and the source of all mercy, grace, and salvation to us! O what praise, and thanksgiving, what perpetual love and service do we owe to this our great deliverer!

Consider 2dly, how the Son of God, coming amongst us by his incarnation, has brought us from heaven most sovereign and effectual remedies for all our evils. He brought *light* to us, who were sitting before in *darkness*, and in the shadow of death: coming in quality of our *teacher*; (both by word and example;) of the great *prophet* sent to us from God; of our *law-giver*: and our *Apostle*: and declaring to us, the whole will of God. He brought with him also our *ransom*, to redeem us from our *slavery* to Satan, and sin; and to make us free indeed: he was sent to *proach deliverance to the captives*, and *sight to the blind*, to *set at liberty them that are bruised*, and to *preach the acceptable year of the Lord*, even the great *jubilee*, of a general remission of all our debts, and a general loosing of all our bands, *Luke* iv. 19. He came as our *physician*, to heal all our maladies, with medicines, made up with his own most sacred blood. *We were wandering in a wilderness*, in a place without water (*Ps. cvi.*) *We could find no way to a city for our habitation*; (our true and everlasting home) *we were hungry, and thirsty*, (destitute of all proper food for our souls) and were *bound in want, and in irons*: *we were brought low with labours, and weakened*; and *there was none to help us*. And he came to deliver us out of all these our *distresses*: to lead us into the right way, to conduct us to our true country; to feed our hungry souls with good things; to break our bonds in *funder*; to bring us refreshment, comfort, and rest from our labours: to cure our weakness with his strength; and to raise us up from death to life. All this, and much more, has the Son of God effected in our favour, by coming down from heaven, to be our *Emmanuel*, that is, to be *God with us*. And shall we not then, my soul,

soul, join with the psalmist, in frequently repeating in admiration at all these wonders, of the divine goodness, that sacred hymn. *Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him: and his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him in the church of the people, and praise him in the chair of the ancients. Let them sacrifice to him a sacrifice of praise, and declare his works with joy. O give glory to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let them say so, that have been redeemed by the Lord; whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of all countries.* (Ps. cvi.) Yea, let them say so, and sing forth the mercies of the Lord, for all eternity. Amen, Amen.

Consider gdly, that however great and inexpressible all these graces, and benefits are, which the Son of God has brought with him by his incarnation, in order to deliver us from all our evils, and to communicate to us all his goods; yet none of them all, nor all of them together, will effectually save us, without our consent and concurrence, and a due correspondence on our part with his mercy, and grace; by our yielding ourselves up entirely to him, by faith, and obedience. For what will it avail us to have the light come down from heaven, to shine upon us, if we shut our eyes against it, and love the darkness more than light? Or what shall we be the better for the *ransom* which our Redeemer brings with him, and lays down for us; if we prefer our slavery and our chains, before the liberty of the children of God; and rather choose to stay with our old masters, Satan and sin, amongst the husks of swine, than to go along with our deliverer, who desires to carry us home with him to his Father's house? Alas, so far from being the better, for all these graces and benefits, brought to us by our Redeemer, we should indeed be much the worse, if we should receive them all in vain, and by our ingratitude, and obstinacy in sin, pervert them to our greater condemnation. For what greater perversity can there be, than that we should

know that *the way, the truth, and the life* is come down from heaven in our favour; and should still choose to go astray from *the way*, and to follow the father of lies, into the regions of *death*.

Conclude to embrace in such manner your great deliverer, who comes by his incarnation, to be your Emmanuel (*God with us*) by a faithful and diligent correspondence with all his mercies and graces; as that he *may be always with you, and you may be always with him*; and that nothing in life, or death, may ever separate you from him any more.

DECEM. 18. *On other benefits of our Saviour to mankind by his incarnation.*

CONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, came amongst us to be *the father*, and *the head of all mankind*, according to the spirit, and according to grace, as Adam was according to the flesh, and according to nature. He came as the *second Adam*, to undo all that *evil*, which the *first Adam* had done and brought upon us all; and to impart to us all that *good*, which the father of our flesh had deprived us of. That *as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death*; and so both sin and death passed upon all men: justice and grace should in like manner enter into this world, by one man, in order to our eternal life. Hence in quality of *our father*, he imparts to us a new generation, a second birth; by which we, who by our natural birth (by which we descend from the *first Adam*) are children of wrath, corrupted by sin, and condemned to hell; are born again by grace, cleansed from sin by his blood, incorporated in him, made children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. In quality of *our head*, he communicates to us all manner of graces, which in virtue of his merits, are derived from him upon all the members of his mystical body, who by faith and obedience adhere to him, St. John xv. 4, 5.

Con sider

Consider 2dly, the other near relations, marked down in the word of God, which our Lord has been pleased we should have with him, by means of his incarnation: such as that of our being now his *brethren*, (as he has been pleased to call us, Ps. xxi. *I will declare thy name to my brethren*) by his taking our flesh and blood. A relation which gives us an honour, not granted to the Angels, of being near a-kin, even by consanguinity, to the Son of God himself: for he never took upon him the nature of the Angels, but took our nature, that he might be like to us in all things, excepting sin. For so it behoved him, who was to be our high-priest, to make a reconciliation for our sins. *Heb. ii. 16, 17.* He is our elder brother, in the order of God's election, *the first-born amongst many brethren.* *Rom. vii. 29:* in whom, and for whose sake, we also are elected; to be conformable to his image, here by grace, and hereafter in glory, through him. In this quality of our eldest brother, he is also our priest (as under the law of nature, before the written law, the first-born were priests) to officiate for us *in all things that appertain to God,* *Heb. v. 1.* as also our prince, our leader, and captain in our warfare, our tutor and governor, our truest friend, to promote all our interest, to manage all our causes, to defend us from all our enemies, and to bring us on in our pilgrimage, till he presents us to his Father, and our Father, in his eternal kingdom. O how happy are we in such a brother!

Consider 3dly, that by means of the incarnation of the Son of God, we are related to him, not only as children to our father, as members to our head, and as brothers to our eldest brother, but also as a holy *building* to our *foundation*, in which he is the *corner stone;* *in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord—a habitation of God in the spirit,* *Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22:* and as branches to the stock, into which we are ingrafted, and planted by baptism. Hence our Lord says to us (*John xv. 4, 5.*)

Abide

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can you except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. But of all the relations we have to the Son of God, in consequence of his incarnation, there is none more endearing, than that of our being made his *spouse*: the church being *the bride, the wife of the Lamb*, brought out of his side, as Eve was from the side of Adam, cast into the deep sleep of death upon the cross; and espoused to him, by an everlasting and inviolable contract, of which Christian matrimony is the sacred and mysterious sign: and every particular soul, that is in the state of grace, partakes in the dignity and happiness, of this near and dear relation of spouses to the Lamb of God. Christians, are you sensible how great this dignity and happiness is, for your souls to be espoused to the Son of God? In consequence of which you should be *one spirit* with Christ, as Adam and Eve were *one flesh*. O take care to be ever faithful and true to this divine spouse; who has loved you, and delivered himself up for you, that he might sanctify you and cleanse you for himself, with his own most precious blood.

Conclude to behave, in your whole life and conversation, agreeably, in all respects, to these sacred relations, which you now have with the Son of God; and never to degenerate from such a father, such a head, such a brother, and such a spouse, by any actions unworthy, of either the dignity, or sanctity of a Christian.

DECEM. 19. *On our Saviour as our king, and our priest.*

CONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, came also amongst us, to be both our *king*, and our *priest*; and in these qualities, to impart all blessings to us; and even to make us also kings and priests to his Father, Apocal. i. 6. He is our true *Melchisedech*, sovereign king and high priest for ever: he is the true *king of justice, and king of peace*; of whose reign there shall be no end. He came, by his incarnation, to dethrone the usurper *Satan*, and to establish amongst us the kingdom of grace, by which he reigns in all the souls of his true subjects. For *his kingdom is not of this world*; nor like to any of these petty kingdoms of this world: but is of a far more excellent constitution, a more noble foundation, and a more extensive dominion, reaching to all nations, and to all ages: it is never to be conquered; it shall be glorious for evermore. Of this great king, and his reign, the royal prophet sings (*P. lxxi.*) ‘ Give to the king thy judgment, O God—to judge thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment. Let the mountains receive peace for the people, and the hills justice. He shall judge the poor of the people, and he shall save the children of the poor, and he shall bring down the oppressor, (the devil.) And he shall continue with the sun, and beyond the moon, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the fleece; and as showers falling gently upon the earth. In his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away. And he shall rule from sea to sea, &c. all kings of the earth shall adore him, all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the poor from the mighty—and he shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from usuries

‘ usuries and iniquities, and their name shall be ho-
‘ nourable in his sight.’ Such, Christians, is our great
King, who shall rule us for evermore: and such are
the blessings, he brings us by his reign: according to
what is written in the same psalm: *In him shall all the
tribes of the earth be blessed. O let his name then be
blessed for evermore; and blessed be his heavenly Father,*
who worketh these wonderful things, in our favour.
Yea blessed be the name of his majesty for ever; and
let the whole earth be filled with his glory. So be it.
So be it.

Consider 2dly, that the Son of God, incarnate for
us, is not only our king: he is our priest too; the
high-priest of God and man. Now every high-priest,
says the Apostle, *Heb. v. 1. taken from among men,
is appointed for men, in the things that appertain to
God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin.*
And thus the Son of God, becoming man by his in-
carnation, was called, by his Father, and anointed to
this high-priestly office, by his Holy Spirit, to exe-
cute every branch of it, to the glory of his Father,
and in behalf of us men. This he did *in the days of
his flesh*, that is, of his mortal life, *by offering up
prayers and supplications, with a strong cry and tears,*
Heb. v. 7. this he did in death, by the great sacrifice,
for the sins of the whole world, which he then offered
upon the altar of the cross. This he still continues to
do, in the sanctuary of heaven, into which he has
carried the blood of his sacrifice, to be there presented
before the throne of his Father: where also with this
blood, he continually makes intercession, for the ob-
taining mercy, grace and salvation for us. Such are
the benefits which are derived upon us from the ever-
lasting priesthood of our Lord. Seeing then, says the
Apostle, *that we have this great high-priest, that hath
passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God: let us
hold fast our confession. For we have not a high-priest,
who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one
tempted in all things like as we, yet without sin. Let
us*

us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid,
Heb. vi. 14, 15, 16.

Consider 3dly, that Christ our Lord, not content with executing the priestly office, in our behalf, whilst he was here upon earth, in his own person; and continuing to execute it himself, after his ascension in the sanctuary of heaven: was pleased moreover before his departure hence, to ordain others, not as his successors (for his priesthood is eternal) but as his ministers; to exercise in his name, and for the benefit of his people, all the offices and functions of the priesthood here amongst us; he assisting and co-operating with them from heaven; and, as he has promised, being always with them, and keeping up a perpetual succession of them, all days, even till the consummation of the world. *Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.* So that we do not only owe to our great high-priest, and to his priesthood, all those blessings, which he himself in person has at any time bestowed upon mankind; but also those many graces and spiritual benefits, which he daily confers upon us, by the ministry of men, whom he has empowered and commissioned to preach his Gospel, administer his sacraments, remit sins in his name, bless in his name, impart the grace of the Holy Ghost, by imposition of hands; and to consecrate, and offer up daily in his name his body and blood, for all the great ends of sacrifice. In all these offices, our Lord assists as our high-priest; and whatsoever grace is here given to the faithful, it is all derived from his priesthood: who has imparted indeed to those whom he has made his vice-gerents, the doctrine, the authority, the Spirit, the anointing, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which he has received of his Father; yet so that in all their performances, he himself is still the principal actor. See then Christians, how happy we are in having such a high priest.

Conclude

Conclude to keep up in your souls a grateful sense of the innumerable benefits, which have been conferred upon all mankind, by the incarnation of the Son of God; by which he is become our king, and our priest. Adhere to him in both these his qualities: daily beg that he would establish his *reign* in you; and by his *priesthood*, deliver you from your sins, and bring you to his Father, to be eternally his.

DECEM. 20. *On our Saviour, as our sacrifice.*

CONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, did not only come amongst us to be our king, and our priest; but also to be our sacrifice: and in that quality to be an inexhaustible source, of all good to our souls. Man, from the beginning, always owed to his God, the homage of adoration, praise and glory; he was ever bound to make him the best offerings he was able; he owed his God perpetual thanksgiving, for his perpetual goodness and bounty to him; and he was ever bound to acknowledge, by prayer, his total dependance upon this giver of all good gifts, without whom he could do nothing. But after sin, he contracted a new debt, by which he was bound to make satisfaction also to the divine justice, for the offence he had committed. Hence we find, from the beginning of the world, frequent mention in the scriptures of sacrifices offered to God: hence, in the law, were so many ordinances, relating to burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings; as so many different kinds of sacrifices, to answer the different branches of man's duty to his maker. But alas! how little proportion was there in all, or any of these ancient sacrifices, with those great ends for which they were offered? How insignificant in itself (abstracting from that sacrifice to come, of which they were all types) was all that homage, adoration, glory, and thanksgiving,

thanksgiving, which was paid to the infinite majesty of God, by these oblations of oxen, goats or sheep. How much less could *the blood of oxen or the blood of goats take away sins*; or be a proper atonement for the great sin of the world, by which man had fallen from his God. Therefore the Son of God came, by his Incarnation, to make himself the victim and sacrifice of all mankind, to substitute himself instead of all those ancient burnt-offerings, sin-offerings and peace-offerings; to answer in a most perfect manner all the ends of sacrifice; and to wash away all our sins, with his own most precious blood. O blessed be his name, through all generations, for this his infinite goodness to us!

Consider 2dly, what great things the Son of God has done for us all, in making himself our sacrifice; and what great things he has enabled us to do, by virtue of his sacrifice. In dying for us upon the cross, he has made himself a *holocaust* or *whole burnt-offering* for us, of most sweet favour to his heavenly Father: a sacrifice of *homage, adoration, praise and glory*, worthy of the infinite majesty of God; because of the infinite dignity both of the offerer, and of the offering. In bowing down his head, and yielding up his spirit for us, by his death, he has also made an oblation of himself, infinitely agreeable to his Father, for all the other ends of sacrifice; here he offered a *thanksgiving*, truly worthy of God, both for himself, and for us: a *peace-offering*, of infinite value, for purchasing *peace*, and all happiness for us; and for opening in our favour all the fountains of grace and life: and particularly he here made himself a *sin-offering* for us all: a *victim of propitiation* of infinite virtue, for taking away all the sins of the world, and reconciling, and bringing back lost men to an eternal union with his God. And this great sacrifice of his, with all its fruits, he has in such manner made over to us, as to authorize and enable us, to offer up the same sacrifice, with him, and in his name, to his Father, for

all the same ends as he did; and to give thereby infinite glory to God; and to procure infinite blessings to ourselves and to all the world.

Consider godly, that this sacrifice, which Christ our Lord offered up to his Father, on the altar of the cross; (as a homage and adoration, which, as man, he paid to him by death; as a thanks-offering of infinite value; as an atonement for sin, more than sufficient to cancel the sins of ten thousand worlds, though infinite in malice, and as an oblation of infinite merit, in the way of prayer, and impetration of all graces and blessings from God, for all mankind, both for time and eternity) did not expire by his death, no more than his priesthood did. The whole victim of his sacrifice was restored to him again, at his resurrection, and he has carried it with him, at his ascension, into the sanctuary of heaven: where, with it, he continually gives adoration and thanks to his Father, both in his own and our name; and continually pleads for mercy and grace for us. But this is not all. He has also appointed this same sacrifice to be kept up for ever in his church, in the sacred mysteries; and to be offered up daily, for the like intentions, on thousands of altars, in all nations, as long as the world shall endure: himself in person, though invisibly, officiating therein, both as priest and victim; both as offerer and offering. See then, my soul, if any thing more can be desired to make us compleatly happy; who have continually amongst us such a sacrifice, in which we have the source of all happiness, and the sovereign means of all good.

Concide never to be wanting, on thy part, in a due correspondence with all these graces, and blessings of heaven; which the Son of God has purchased for thee by his sacrifice; and which he daily seeks to enrich thee with, by the application of the fruits of his sacrifice, in the daily oblation of his own body and blood. O learn then, my soul, to unite all thy performances with those of the Son of God, incarnate

for

for the love of thee; and daily offer thyself with him, who daily offers himself in sacrifice for the love of thee! Unite all thy adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, with that which thy Saviour, as man, continually presents to his Father in heaven, and with all that which he daily offers him, on a million of altars, here upon earth: and thy adoration, praise and thanksgiving, will not fail of being accepted of. In like manner unite all thy prayers, and supplications for mercy, with those of Jesus Christ, and with his sacrifice; and thou shalt always find through him both mercy and grace.

DECEM. 21. *On St. Thomas, the Apostle.*

CONSIDER first, that in celebrating the festivals of the Saints, we must principally have in view the glorifying the God of the Saints, and the giving him thanks for all the wonders of his grace in them; and all that glory to which he has exalted them; and with which he has crowned them to all eternity. Now God is wonderful indeed in all his Saints; but in none more than in the Apostles; whom he raised from the lowest and meanest condition in life, as it were from the earth, and from the dunghill, to make them the princes of his people; the pillars, and foundations of his church; prodigies of his grace; full of his divine spirit; dispensers of all his treasures, and workers of all kind of wonders here upon earth; and now has exalted them to sit with him on his throne in heaven, to come one day with him to be the judges both of men and angels. See then, Christians, what subjects we have to meditate upon, on the festivals of the Apostles; what motives we have to praise, and glorify God for all he has done for them; and through them for us all: what encouragements we here have, however mean and poor we may be in all that is good, to rely on the power, goodness and mercy of our God; who loves to work his greatest wonders in

favour of such as are little and humble: and what lessons we have for our instruction, and our imitation, in the ready correspondence of the apostles with divine grace, and their diligent co-operation with it, unto the end.

Consider 2dly, from the epistle read on this day (*Eph. ii. 19.*) the great advantages we have received through the ministry of the Apostles, in our being called to the Christian religion, of which they were the first preachers, and teachers. For now, says St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, *you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domesticks of God; built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord, &c.* Yes, Christians, it was by the ministry of the Apostles, we were originally brought to all this good: and as the same Apostle adds, *Heb. xii. 21.* by our admission into the church of God, we are now come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of Angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all; and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new testament, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel: viz. by crying to heaven for mercy, and not for justice. O happy communion of Saints! A communion in all that is good, with all that are good: to which we have been introduced by the Apostles of Christ. O glory for evermore be to their Lord, the author of all their good, and of all our good!

Consider 3dly, the particular lessons which St. Thomas teaches us by his example. When the other disciples opposed our Saviour's going back to Jerusalem, where the Jews had lately sought his death; St. Thomas alone generously said: *Let us also go, that we may die with him, John xi. 16.* Such was his love for

for his master, and such his courage in his cause. Are we in the like dispositions? Are we willing to die with Christ; or for Christ; when we are frightened with every little difficulty or danger; and ever ready to turn our backs upon him, rather than to risk any thing for him; or part with our own humour, or satisfaction for the love of him? St. Thomas was slow of belief, with regard to the resurrection of our Lord; till he was favoured both with the sight of him, and the handling of his wounds: but then he yielded himself up immediately; and cried out with a most lively faith, and ardent love, *my Lord and my God!* This lively faith, and ardent love, continued with him, ever growing and encroaching: and carried him through all his apostolick labours amongst so many barbarous nations (to which he is said to have preached the gospel) and through all his sufferings, till by a glorious martyrdom, it brought him to his Lord, and eternally united him to him. O that we had but some little share in this lively faith, and ardent love! It would make all our labours and sufferings easy to us, and bring us also to our Lord.

Conclude so to glorify God in this Saint, as to encourage thyself also to walk in his footsteps, by an imitation of his virtues; in hopes of sharing in his happiness. And for this end, ever beg his prayers and intercession.

DECEM. 22. *On the Ember Week in Advent.*

CONSIDER first, that the Ember weeks, at the four seasons of the year, are times set aside by the church, from the earliest ages, for fasting and prayer. The primitive church had that zealous regard for the glory of God, and the sanctification of the souls of her children, by training them up to these religious exercises, so much recommended by the word of God; that she would not suffer any of the four parts of the year to pass, without calling upon them all, to sanctify

one week at least, by more than ordinary devotion; and by offering up to God therein the tribute of a penitential fast. In which also she had moreover in view, that by their diligence in this practice, her children might draw down a blessing from God, on all their labours, and on the fruits of the earth; that they might give thanks for the blessings already received; and implore the divine mercy for the forgiveness of the sins they were continually committing. Christians, let us, at these holy times, enter into these views of our holy mother the church: and by joining as it were in a body, with all the people of God upon earth, in fasting, in alms-deeds, and in humble prayer, make the best return we are able to the giver of all good gifts, for all his benefits: beg a continuance of his graces and blessings; and the pardon of all our sins; through the merits of the passion and death of his only Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Consider 2dly, that these penitential fasts of the ember weeks, are also instituted in order to turn away the judgments of God; which we have too great reason to apprehend may be hanging over our heads on account of our sins. For if we duly consider the multitude, and enormity of the crimes, that are daily and hourly committed amongst Christians, of all degrees and conditions; crimes that continually cry to heaven for vengeance; and how few there are in comparison that are not frequently falling into mortal sin, in one shape or another: we cannot but fear lest the very worst of God's judgments may speedily fall upon Christendom, if not averted by prayer and penance. It is then not only a duty of obedience to our mother the church, but a charity also that we owe both to ourselves, and to our neighbours, to join at these times in prayer and penance; in order to prevent these dismal visitations of the divine justice: and *to turn now to the Lord with our whole heart, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning*, as the prophet admonishes (*Joel ii.*) that so by entering into dispositions of true penitents, and seriously

riously turning away from the evil of our sins, we may prevail with our merciful God to turn away also his scourges from us, which we have deserved by our sins. O that Christians would remember this, on all their days of fasting: and would always enter into the true spirit of these institutions, chiefly designed for the abolishing sin, and appeasing the divine justice! Thus would they offer up to God, such a fast as he has chosen. Thus would their fasting draw down a blessing from him.

Consider 3dly, that the Ember weeks are also set aside by the church of Christ, for the times of giving holy orders: which, by apostolical tradition, and by the example of the apostles, ought to be accompanied with prayer and fasting, *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. xiv. 22. Yes Christians, as there is not any one thing, on which both the general good of the whole church, and the welfare of every soul in particular, so much depends, as upon having Saints for our pastors; and such as may be men according to God's own heart; who both by word and work may continually promote the glory of God, and the salvation of souls: so there is not any one thing, which more pressingly calls for our prayers and fasting, than the obtaining such pastors from God. This should indeed have a great part in our devotion at all times: but more especially at these times of their ordination. Bad priests are sometimes permitted by God, as one of his most dreadful judgments, upon the sins of the people. It is the busines of all Christians, by praying well, and living well, to avert this judgment; and to obtain better guides.

Conclude to labour, by more than ordinary devotion and penance, at these holy times, to answer all the ends of these ancient institutions. This ember week in particular, and all the latter part of Advent, (that is, twelve whole days before Christmas,) by an ancient custom of the primitive English church, was dedicated by our Catholick ancestors to fasting, watching, prayer, and

and alms: and all the faithful, at this time, betook themselves to confession and penance, in order to prepare themselves for a worthy participation of the body of the Lord, on Christmas day. As we learn from B. Egbert, who was Archbishop of York above a thousand years ago, (*in Dialogo de ecclesiastica institutione*). O how much have we degenerated from this ancient piety!

DECEM. 23. *On the preparation for the birth of Christ*

CONSIDER first, that when the time drew near, in which the world was to be blessed with the birth of our Saviour; the Blessed Virgin, who bore him in her womb, and her chaste Spouse St. Joseph, in obedience to the edict of the emperor Augustus, took a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, there to be enrolled in the city of David, as they were both of them of the royal stock of David. The emperor, in giving out these orders, had no other view than the gratifying his vanity, or his avarice, by the tax imposed on that occasion. But God, who had ordained, and foretold long before, by his prophet Micheas, that his Son should be born in Bethlehem, was pleased to bring about his eternal decrees in this manner; and to prepare by this occasion, a place for his birth, suitable to the great designs, for which he sent him into this world. For behold after a long and wearisome winter's journey, when the Blessed Mother, with the Son of God in her womb, was arrived at Bethlehem, the town was full; and none of the inhabitants, not even of their own kindred and family, would receive them into their houses; or give them any entertainment: the very inns would not lodge them; *there was no room for them*. O ye heavens, stand astonished to see the Son of God, the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, thus debase himself from the very beginning, as not to allow himself even in his very birth, any of the common conveniences of life; no not so much as a house to cover his

his head! O let him be so much the more dear to us, by how much he has made himself more mean and contemptible, for the love of us!

Consider 2dly, what kind of a palace the king of heaven prepared on this occasion for the birth of his Son. St. Joseph, after seeking in vain for a lodging, in the town, found out at last an open stable, or stall for beasts, exposed on all sides to the inclemency of the weather; which, for want of better accommodations, their poverty and humility were contented to take up with. And this was the palace the divine wisdom made choice of for the birth of our great king; the manger here, which had served for the ox and the ass, was the royal bed of state, in which he was first laid, upon his coming down amongst us. O how has the Word incarnate here annihilated himself for us! O how loudly has he condemned, from his very birth, our corrupt self-love in all its branches; with all the maxims of worldly pride, and the favourite inclinations of flesh and blood! Man fell originally from God, by proudly affecting a superior excellence, which might make him like to God; by coveting to have, what God did not allow him; and by seeking to gratify his sensual appetite, with the forbidden fruit: therefore the Son of God begins his mortal life, by the exercise of a most profound humility, to cure our pride; by embracing a voluntary poverty, even to the want of all things, in opposition to our covetousness, and love of the mammon of the world; and by choosing for himself hardships and sufferings, in opposition to our love of sensual and worldly pleasures. O let us study well these lessons, which this heavenly master begins to teach us, by his great example, even from his first appearance amongst us!

Consider 3dly, Christian souls, that the Son of God, who heretofore came down from heaven, to be born into this world *for you*, earnestly desires at present to be spiritually born *in you*. See then, that you correspond, on your part, with this his earnest desire,

by

by preparing your souls for him; and giving them up to him. O be not like those unhappy Bethlemites, who refused him a place in their houses, and would not find any room for him! But then if you are willing to admit him, take care to discharge from your inward house all such company as is disagreeable to him. For how great soever his desire is, of coming and being spiritually born in your souls, he will not come thither, as long as you wilfully entertain there his and your mortal enemies, *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*: those very enemies, whom he came from heaven to fight against; and against whom he has declared an eternal war, by the austerity, poverty and humility of his birth, of his education, and of his whole life, and death. Moreover if you desire to have him to abide in you, by virtue of a spiritual birth, you must allow him the chiefest place in your heart and soul, by driving far away from you all irregular affections to the world, or to any creature whatsoever. For though he did not disdain the stable, nor the crib; the ox, nor the ass: he will not endure a heart divided, or occupied by unclean affections; which will not allow him the whole bed, without a partner in love.

Conclude to let nothing be wanting on your part, to ensure to yourselves the happiness of having the Son of God spiritually born in your soul. O invite him thither, with all possible affection; ready to give up all things else, that he may abide with you: and beg of him, who knows your poverty and misery, that he would prepare himself a place in you, and furnish your souls with all those ornaments of virtue and grace, which are suitable to this his spiritual birth.

DECEM. 24. *On the birth of Christ.*

CONSIDER first, that the time being now come, in which the Son of God was to be born into this world; in the silence of the night, and in the obscurity of a stable, the eternal Word of God, by whom all things were made, issued out from his nine months close confinement in his mother's womb, without any detriment of her virginal integrity; and so came to dwell amongst us. See, my soul, and contemplate with thy inward eyes this lovely babe, (O how lovely indeed, and loving to us!) already beginning to suffer for thee, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. See how this blessed mother takes him up from the ground, shivering with cold: see with what profound reverence, on the one hand, and with what ardent love and affection on the other, she embraces him; and carefully wraps him up in swaddling cloaths, and lays him in the manger. But see also, in the midst of all this poverty and humility of this new-born king, all the heavenly Choirs of Angels and Archangels, and all the Cherubims and Seraphims, descending from heaven, to adore their Lord, and to sing their hymns of praise and glory to him: according to that of the Apostle, *H.b. i. 6.* that when God brought his first-born into the world, he said: *Let all the Angels of God adore him.* Christians, let us join with all these heavenly spirits: let us join with the Blessed Virgin, the mother of God, in our homage of adoration, praise and thanksgiving to the Son of God, born into this world to be our *Emmanuel* (*God with us*) and to save us: let us welcome him at his birth and embrace him, with all the affection of our souls.

Consider 2dly, what we read *Luke ii.* that at the time of the birth of our Lord, 'there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone

• shone round about them, and they feared with a
• great fear. And the Angel said to them: fear not :
• for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy,
• that shall be to all the people : for this day is born to
• you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of
• David. And this shall be a sign unto you : you shall
• find the infant wrapped in swaddling cloaths, and laid
• in a manger. And suddenly there was with the An-
• gel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God,
• and saying: glory to God in the highest, and on
• earth peace to men of good will.' See Christians
you study well the lessons designed for you in this whole
passage. Behold a heavenly messenger is here sent, to
carry the first news, the happy tidings, of the birth of
the Son of God; born into this world, to be the Sa-
viour of the world. But to whom do you think, does
God send this joyful message, this heavenly embassy ?
Not to any of the great ones of this world; nor to any
of the worldly wise, nor to the learned, nor to the rich,
nor to any of them that lived at their ease, and wallowed
in sensual pleasures. No: their pride and self-conceit,
their love of the world, and of the things of this world,
their love of sensual and carnal pleasures, fastened them
down to the earth, and disqualified them for the visits
of heaven. What manner of men then were they
who were favoured with this glorious vision, and this
heavenly message: and in consequence of it were the
first, after the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, that had
the happiness to see and to worship the Saviour of the
world; to believe in him themselves, and to preach,
and publish his coming to their neighbours? O they
were poor, humble, harmless shepherds, *keeping the*
night watches over their flock; attentive to the busi-
ness of their humble calling, and likely employing that
silent time of the night, in joining the praises of God
and prayer, with the care of their sheep. Now such
as these are commonly the favourites of the most
High, who *resists the proud, and gives his grace to*
the humble. See, my soul, these be also thy disposition ,
if

if thou wouldst be favoured by our Lord with his divine graces.

Consider 3dly, the words of the Angel to the shepherds: *I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour.* See, Christians, what ought to be the subject of your joy, at this holy time: a Saviour is born this day to you, who comes to *save his people from their sins*; who comes to deliver you from the power and slavery of the devil, and from hell, and damnation: and to bring to you mercy, grace and salvation. O here is a just subject of true joy indeed! Not like the joys of worldlings, which are either vain, and foolish, or base, and filthy; but a joy in the Lord, and in his goodness, which opens to us by this mystery the gate of joys, that shall never end. O let us then join with all the heavenly choirs, in the sacred hymn, they sung on this occasion: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will.* Let us ever glorify him, who has wrought these wonders for us; and who has sent us, by the birth of his Son, *justice and abundance of peace till the moon be taken away.* O how lovely, how desirable is this blessed peace of God's good-will to men, which is to abide with us, and make us happy for all eternity!

Conclude to imitate the shepherds; by going over with them in spirit to Bethlehem, this night, and there paying your homage, and making your offering to your new-born King. The offering he calls for is that of your heart. O give it him without reserve! But let it be a loving heart, to answer that love, which has brought him down from heaven to you: let it be a *contrite and humble heart*, in consideration of your ingratitude, and manifold sins against him.

DECEM. 25. *On Christmas-Day.*

CONSIDER first, that the devotion of this holy time, and of this day in particular, calls us to the crib of Bethlehem, there to contemplate our infant Saviour, and to entertain our souls with him. O what a large field have we here opened to us, for our meditations! Christians, place yourselves in spirit, near

the manger of your Lord, and fix the eyes of your soul upon him. Reflect, *who* this is, whom you see here lying before you, as a helpless infant, in this open stall; suffering, and weeping, poor, and humble, wrapt up in these mean swaddling cloaths, and laid in this crib, between an ox, and an ass? O! your faith will inform you, that under all these mean appearances here lies concealed the Lord of glory! This infant, not yet one day old, is the eternal Son of the eternal God: this weak helpless babe, is he who by his almighty power made both heaven and earth: he who is here wrapt up so straitly, and confined to this narrow crib, fills heaven and earth, with his incomprehensible immensity: this speechless child, is God's own Word, who called all things out of nothing, and whom all things obey. O wonderful mystery, which has thus joined together the highest, and the lowest; all that is great in heaven, with all that is little and contemptible upon earth, in the person of this infant God! But what is the meaning of all this? What has brought this great God down to this stable, to this crib? Why has he thus debased, and perfectly annihilated himself? O my soul, it is for thy sake: it is for the love of thee; it is to redeem thee, and deliver thee from sin, and hell: it is to give thee an example of all virtue; it is to draw thy heart to himself, and to engage thee to love him.

Consider 2dly, and study well the great lessons, which the Son of God desires to teach thee from the crib. Learn to be humble, by the contemplation of his unparalleled humiliations, which he here so joyfully embraces for thy sake: learn to be poor in spirit, by the consideration of his voluntary poverty; learn mortification and self-denial, by the view of his sufferings, which are all of his own choice. Learn of him here to despise this cheating world, and all its empty shows, its painted toys, its childish amusements, and all the allurements of its sensual pleasures, which he, who is the wisdom of God, despises and condemns in his birth. But especially apply thyself to study well, and to learn from the contemplation of the Son of God in the crib, the infinite charity of God, his infinite love for

for thee, and the infinite enormity of sin, by which we continually rebel against this infinite charity. O my soul, if thou couldst but penetrate, with thy inward eyes, into the heart of this thy infant God: what heavenly flames wouldst thou there discover, of a more than seraphick love for thee! Thou wouldst there meet thyself, in the midst of the heart of thy Saviour, where he has so long given thee a place. O there thou would effectually learn both to hate thy sins, and to love thy God.

Consider 3dly, the affections with which thou oughtest to accompany thy meditations, in the stable of Bethlehem; if thou desirest to entertain there in a proper manner thy new-born King and Saviour. Here thou must exercise thyself, in acts of all the three divine, or theological virtues; of a lively *faith* in this thy infant God; and all his sacred truths, which lie here concealed in this mystery of his incarnation and birth; of all the wonders of his almighty power, wisdom, and goodness, which he has here wrought for the love of us; and of all the treasures of heaven, which he here brings with him, to communicate to our souls: of a most firm *hope* and confidence, in his infinite power, mercy, and goodness; which he discovers to thee in this mystery: of a most ardent *love* for him, in return for all that love, which he here shews thee. Then pour forth thy soul, in his presence, in acts of *adoration*, *praise*, and *glory*; in acts of *thanksgiving* for all he has done for thee, and for the whole world; in acts of *oblation* of thy whole being, and of all the powers of thy soul, to his love and service: and make at his feet, (who is come to be the great high-priest of God and men) an humble confession of all thy sins, with a most hearty sorrow and contrition, for having ever offended so good a God: craving mercy, pardon and absolution of him, and through him; and firmly resolving upon a new life for the future.

Conclude to let this be thy daily exercise, during this holy time of Christmas: and not to suffer any worldly entertainments or diversions, to keep thee out of the company of thy Saviour; at least so far as to

hinder thee from waiting often on him, and spending a competent part of thy time with him, in proper meditations and affections. If thou art a loss to know, how thou oughtest to entertain thyself with him; beg of him to teach thee: for he comes to be thy teacher. And if thou art sensible of the meanness of thy own performances, in point of adoration, praise, glory, thanksgiving, &c. offer up to the eternal Father, the adoration, praise, glory, and thanksgiving, of this new-born Saviour, to supply thy defects.

DECEM. 26. *On St. Stephen.*

CONSIDER first that St. Stephen was the first martyr; that is, the first who bore witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ; by laying down his life for him: the first who after the death and passion of the Son of God, returned him blood for blood, life for life: the first who was so happy as to be made a victim of divine love, a holocaust of sweet favour in the sight of God: in fine the first who washed his robes by martyrdom in the blood of the Lamb, and is now at the head of his heavenly train, who stand before the throne of God, and serve him day and night, in his temple: where he who sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them: and they shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and shall lead them to the living fountains of waters, &c. *Apocal. vii. 15, &c.* O my soul, what a glory, what a happiness it is, to lay down life itself for divine love! But alas! how far are the generality of Christians from this perfection of charity, who are so unwilling to suffer, even the least inconveniences, for the sake of their heavenly lover? And is not this our case too? O let us love at least these generous lovers of our God: let us conceive a holy envy for their happiness: let us aspire to some degree of this happiness, by sighing, and praying for a share in their charity and love.

Consider 2dly, the character, which is given to St. Stephen, by the Spirit of God. He was a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, *Acts vi. 5.* He was full of grace and fortitude, and did great wonders and miracles

els among the people, verse. 8. By his zeal, the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly, v. 7. And though many adversaries rose up, who disputed against him, they were none of them able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke, v. 10. And when he was hurried by them before the council; all who were there saw his face, as if it had been the face of an Angel, v. 15. His zeal for the faith of Christ, and the courage and constancy, with which he maintained it before the council, was rewarded with a heavenly vision, in which he saw the glory of God, and the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God, *Acts* vii. 55. And his bearing testimony to this truth, drew off his martyrdom: for presently casting him forth out of the city, they stoned him: invoking the Lord, and saying Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice: saying: Lord lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord, *Act.* viii. 57, 58, 59. Christians, what admirable lessons and examples have we here of all virtues, in an heroick degree, in the life and death of this glorious Saint? He was full of faith: he was full of the Holy Ghost, and his gifts: he was full of grace: he was full of fortitude: he was full of zeal: he was full of heavenly wisdom: he was full of divine charity: in a word, he was full of God, and of all good. O how happy shall we be, if we seriously endeavour to walk in the footsteps of this great Saint, by an imitation of these his virtues.

Consider 3dly, that as amongst the virtues of St. Stephen, none was more remarkable than his charity; so none more pressingly calls for our imitation. Charity has two branches, the love of God, and the love of our neighbours: the love of God, with our whole heart, and with our whole soul; and the love of our neighbours as ourselves. This love of God is exercised by seeking, and by promoting, in all things, the glory of God, by sanctifying his name, both by word and work; by labouring to propagate his kingdom; by a perpetual conformity of our will to his will, and a perpetual dedication of our whole selves to his divine ser-

vice. Thus did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of God: not by the bare profession of the tongue, but by work, and in truth. In like manner the love of our neighbours is exercised, by seeking and promoting their true and everlasting welfare, upon all occasions; by withdrawing them from the error of their way, and from the broad road that leads to perdition; and bringing them to God, and to his grace: thus also did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of his neighbours, by preaching and by his prayers; by his zeal for the salvation of their souls; and by his sparing no pains to bring them to Christ; though this his charity cost him his life. Now, *greater love than this no man hath, that a man should lay down his life for his friends*, John xv. 13. But the most difficult point of all in the line of charity, as it regards our neighbours, is the love of our enemies; of which St. Stephen has given us a most glorious example in his last dying prayer for them, that were actually stoning him *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

Conclude to honour this great Saint, by diligently imitating his love for his God, his zeal for his glory, and for the salvation of souls, his fortitude and constancy in his sufferings, and his charity for his enemies. And to this end beg the assistance of his prayers.

DEC. 27. *On St. John the Apostle, and Evangelist.*

CONSIDER first, upon how many accounts we ought to honour St. John, the beloved disciple of the Son of God; and to glorify God in him, for the extraordinary gifts and graces which he bestowed upon him. He was called in his youth, whilst he was as yet innocent and pure, to follow our Lord Jesus; and he readily obeyed the call, and left both his parents, and all things else for the sake of Christ. His zeal and fortitude in the cause of his master procured him the name of *Boanerges, or a son of thunder.* The purity of his soul and body made him a special favourite of his Lord; who therefore admitted him to lean upon his bosom, at his last supper, and to draw from that sacred fountain of life, the heavenly waters of grace and truth;

and

and on the following day, when he was dying upon the cross, he recommended his Virgin mother to his care, that she might be his mother, and he might be her son. O blessed Saint, great favourite both of Jesus and Mary, introduce us also, by the interest thou hast now in heaven, into some share in their favour; by procuring for us, by thy prayers, the grace to imitate thy purity.

Consider 2dly, to what a height St. John was raised by divine grace. He was made an *Apostle*, and one of the chiefest of the *Apostles*; even one of the three, that were chosen by our Lord, to be witnesses both of his glory on mount Thabor, and of his anguish and agony, on mount Olivet. He was also an *Evangelist*, or writer of the Gospel, (which none of the other Apostles were, except St. Matthew) and amongst the four evangelists, is compared to the *eagle* (which flies high, and looks upon the sun with a stedfast eye) because of his sublime beginning, by taking his first flight up to the eternal Word, by whom all things were made; and his following, throughout his whole Gospel, the same sublime course, with his eye still fixed on this great Sun of justice, and the immense light of his divinity. St. John was also a *Martyr*, by drinking of the chalice of his Lord, (as he had foretold him) by a long course of sufferings; and by being at length sentenced to death, by the tyrant Domitian, and cast into a vessel of boiling oil; from whence he was delivered by an evident miracle. In fine he was a *Prophet*, to whom our Lord revealed an infinite multitude of heavenly secrets, and mysteries, relating to latter times; which we find recorded in his *Apocalypse*, written during his banishment, in the isle of Patmos. See then, my soul, how many titles this great Saint has to our veneration. But remember at the same time that the veneration which will please him best, will be a love and imitation of his virtues.

Consider 3dly, that the writings of St. John recommend nothing so much as charity and verity, love, and truth. These they continually inculcate: charity, because God is charity: he is all love; he has died for love:

love: *let us therefore love God*, saith he, *because God first hath loved us.* But then this, saith he, is the love of God, this is the charity we owe him, to keep his commandments. And this commandment we have from God, (the favourite commandment indeed of the Son of God) that we should love one another. This love for one another all his epistles are full of, this sweet odour they all breathe, with this they join *verity or truth, loving in truth, walking in truth for the sake of the truth, which abideth in us, and shall be with us for ever.* And what is this truth, but the Son of God himself, *the way, the truth, and the life?* Such was always the doctrine of St. John: this he perpetually preached, both by word and writing: such was the spirit of this disciple of love.

Conclude to embrace, with all thy soul, this *charity and verity*, this *love and truth*, so much recommended by St. John; or rather by the Spirit of God, through him. Keep close to this charity and verity here, and it will abide with thee for ever hereafter, and will make thee happy for endless ages.

DECEM. 28. *On the Holy Innocents.*

CONSIDER first, that the Son of God, who was born into this world to be the Saviour of the world, was no sooner born, but he began to be persecuted by the children of this world. The wicked king Herod, to secure to himself and his family, the temporal kingdom of Judea, seeks the life of this new-born king; of whose birth he had been informed, by the fages of the East: and in order to compass his impious design, employs both craft, and (when this was eluded) open violence, by the barbarous massacre of the Innocents. But all to no other purpose than to shew, how vain are the designs and efforts of men against the decrees of God; according to that of the wise man, Prov. xxi. 30. *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord.* Our new born Saviour, by divine admonition, was carried away to Egypt, out of the reach of the tyrant: and all his barbarity served only to render the birth of the Messias more illustrious, by spreading the fame of it through all the world; and

to crown at the same time so many innocent martyrs: whilst, for his own part, it brought a perpetual odium upon his infamous memory; which no length of time can ever efface; and drew down most terrible judgments (within the compass of a year) upon his head. And as to his numerous family, for which he was so solicitous, they quickly lost the kingdom; and were in a short time totally extirpated. O see, Christians, how sad a thing it is wilfully to fight against our Saviour, by known sin; and how dismal the consequences are of all such undertakings.

Consider 2dly, what we read, Matt. ii. 16, &c. *Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry: and sending killed all the men Children, that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under.* These, my soul, are the *holy Innocents*, whose feast we celebrate this day; as happy martyrs, bearing testimony, not by their words, but by their blood, to the birth of the Son of God. These are his first victims, immolated as so many lambs, to illustrate the coming of the Lamb of God, born into this world, to take away the sins of the world. These are the first flowers of the martyrs, cropt in the very bud, by the impious persecutor of Christ: these the first fruits, produced by the coming of our Lord, and presented by him to his Father: to be followed afterwards by that abundant harvest, out of all nations, of innumerable glorious champions of Christ, who should maintain his cause, by the testimony of their blood. To these the church applies, in the lesson of this day, that of the Apocalypse xiv. 4, 5. *These are they, who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God, and to the Lamb: and in their mouth there was found no lye: for they are without spot before the throne of God.* O let us honour these first martyrs of the Son of God.

Consider 3dly, that purity, innocence, and temporal sufferings are by divine appointment the way to eternal happiness. By this road, the *holy Innocents* arrived thither:

thither: O how happy are all they who are walking in this road! See then, Christians, how greatly you are deceived, in flying so much from sufferings, since these are to bring you to your God. There was lamentation, and great mourning in Bethlehem, of the mothers of the *holy Innocents*; they were not to be comforted, because they had lost their children. In the mean time, there was great joy in heaven, for their happy transmigration to a better region of endless bliss. Thus when the world is sorrowful, heaven rejoices: because the sufferings of this short time, produce for the sufferers, an eternal weight of glory in that blessed kingdom: whereas they that are without sufferings are in danger of never coming thither.

Conclude to embrace whatsoever share may be appointed for thee in the sufferings of this life, as designed by divine providence to help thee to heaven. Assure thyself that thy God knows what is best for thee; and that he sends thee, what he knows to be the best. Had not the Innocents been brought to God by the means of their sufferings, they might have lived to have crucified their Lord; and instead of being eternally happy, might have been eternally miserable.

DECEM. 29. *On the gospel of the good Shepherd, John x. read on the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury.*

CONSIDER first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation and birth, did not only come amongst us, to be our father, and to be our head; our king, our priest, and our sacrifice; our brother, and our friend; our physician, and our advocate, &c. but also recommends himself to us in this Gospel, under the amiable quality of the *good Shepherd*, and pastor of our souls: *I am the good Shepherd*, saith he, verse 11. *the good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep*. But the hireling, and he that is not the Shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and runneth away: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep: but the hireling runneth away, because he is a hireling; and he hath no concern for the sheep. *I am the good*

good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep. &c. O Christians, how happy are we in such a shepherd; so great, so good, so loving, so careful, of our true welfare! O he is the good shepherd indeed, who came down from heaven, to seek the poor sheep that was lost; and when he had found it, took it upon his own shoulders, to carry it home, with joy, to his heavenly fold! *Luke xv.* O how dearly have his sheep cost him! O how truly has he made good in himself, that sentence that *the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep!* O let us ever embrace and love, follow and obey, this true shepherd of our souls.

Consider 2dly, how many ways this heavenly *shepherd*, is daily providing for all the necessities of his sheep; and the tender affection he perpetually shews them. *The Lord ruleth me* (or as it is in the original, *is my shepherd*) saith the psalmist, *Ps. xxii, and I shall want nothing; He hath set me in a place of pasture.* Yes Christians, he has placed our souls here in the midst of the rich pastures, of his divine word, and sacraments, in the communion of his church. He hath *brought us up by the streams of the living waters of his grace*, which are ever flowing to refresh and nourish us. He conducts us to the paths of justice; he converts our souls; he is with us, even when we are walking in the midst of the shadow of death: his rod and his staff still comfort and support us. But O give ear my soul to what follows in the same psalm. *Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me.* *Thou hast anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!* Here are benefits indeed of this divine pastor of our souls: he has prepared a table for us, in which he feeds his sheep, with his own most sacred body and blood: he anoints our heads with the divine oil of his holy Spirit: and he inebriates us with the goodly chalice of his passion, continually offered up on our altars, to be a plentiful source to us of all heavenly grace. And in consequence of all these favours, already

ready bestowed on us, he encourages us to conclude with the royal prophet; that *his mercy will follow us all the days of our life; and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord, unto length of days*, even to a happy eternity.

Consider 3dly, what we owe, in quality of the sheep of Christ, to this divine shepherd. He tells us, *John x. 3, 4 5.* That *his sheep hear the voice of their shepherd: that he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out: that he goeth before them; and that the sheep follow him, because they know his voice: but a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers.* And again verse, 27, 28. *My sheep hear my voice: and I know them; and they follow me. And I give them eternal life; and they shall not perish for ever; and no man shall snatch them out of my hand.* Christians, do we keep close to this heavenly shepherd? Do we follow him both by our faith, and by our life? Do we know him, and hear his voice? Do we fly from strangers, the world, the flesh, and the devil? If so, we are his sheep indeed; and if we persevere, he will bring us, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the pastures of eternal life. But if we run away from our shepherd, to follow these strangers, we must expect to fall a prey to the wolves.

Conclude to embrace your divine Saviour, under this amiable character of the pastor and shepherd of your souls: and as nothing has been wanting on his side, to fulfil, in the utmost perfection, even beyond all expression and imagination, every part of the character of the *good Shepherd*; see nothing be wanting on your side, to fulfil, by a perpetual correspondence with his grace, every part of the character of *good sheep.*

DECEM. 30. *On the conclusion of the year.*

CONSIDER first, that the year is now come to a conclusion: it is just upon the point of expiring: all these twelve-months, that are now past, have flowed away

away into the gulph of eternity: they are now no more: they will return to us no more. All our years pass in this manner: they all hasten away one after another; and hurry us along with them, till they bring us also into an endless, unchangeable eternity. Our years will all be soon over: we shall find ourselves at the end of our lives, much sooner than we imagine. O let us not then set our hearts upon any of these transitory things: let us despise all that passes away with this short life; and learn to adhere to God alone, who never passes away, because he is eternal. Let us be always prepared for our departure hence.

Consider 2dly, that as the year is now past and gone, so are all the pleasures of it, all our diversions, all our amusements, in which we have spent our time this year, are now no more: the remembrance of them is but like that of a dream. O such is the condition of all things that pass with time! Why then do we set our esteem, or affection upon any of them? Why are we not practically and feelingly convinced of the emptiness and vanity of them all: and that nothing deserves our love, or attention, but God and eternity? And as the pleasures of the year are all past, so are all the displeasures and uneasinesses, pains and mortifications of it: they are also now no more than like a dream: and so will all temporal evils appear to us, a little while hence; when we shall see ourselves upon the brink of eternity. Let us then learn only to fear those evils, which will have no end; and the evil of sin, which leads to those never-ending evils.

Consider 3dly, how you have spent your time this year. It was all given you by your Creator, in order to bring you forward to him, and to a happy eternity. O how many favours and blessings have you received from him every day of the year! How many graces and invitations to good! And what use have you made of all these favours? What virtue have you acquired this year? What vice have you rooted out? What passions have you overcome? Have you made any improvement at all in virtue, since the beginning of this year? In-
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stead of going forwards to God, have you not rather gone backward? Alas! what an account shall you have to give one day for all this precious time; and for all these graces and blessings, spiritual or corporal, which you have so ungratefully abused, and perverted during the course of this year? Then as to your sins, whether of omission, or commission; against God, your neighbours, or yourselves; which you have been guilty of this year, either by thought, word, or deed; what a dreadful scene will open itself to your eyes, upon a little examination! And how little have you done, during the course of this year, to cancel them by penance! O how melancholy would your case be, if your eternal lot were to be determined by your performances of this past year!

Conclude by giving thanks to God, for all his blessings of this year; and especially for his patience, and forbearance with you in your sins. Return now at least to him with your whole heart; begging mercy and pardon for all the sins of the year, and for all the sins of your life. And resolve with God's grace, if he is pleased to give you another year, to spend it in such a manner as to secure to your souls the never ending year of a happy eternity.

DECEM. 31. *On the Gospel of girding the loins, &c.*
Luke xii. 35, &c, read for St. Silvester.

CONSIDER first, those words of our Lord to his disciples, and in them, to all Christians: *Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands; and be you like to men, who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.* This girding of our loins, and having lamps burning in our hands, are to be taken in a spiritual sense; and contain great and necessary lessons for every part of our lives. As we know not the hour, when our Lord will come to us, and knock at our door by death: **w**e must keep ourselves always awake, and in a proper posture

posture and readiness, to open to him without delay, and to welcome him. Now this proper posture, and readiness to welcome our Lord, whensoever he shall come and knock, chiefly consists in those two things, in having *our loins always girt*, by a constant restraint of our irregular inclinations and lusts; and having *lamps always burning in our hands*, by the constant exercise of Christian virtues; which may shine forth to the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbours. And those servants are happy indeed, who are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, with their *loins girt* in this manner, and holding such lamps as these, always burning in their hands.

Consider 2dly, what follows in the same Gospel, with regard to the immense reward of these same faithful servants. *Amen I say to you, that their Lord will gird himself, and make them fit down to meat, and passing will minister to them.* Christians, what an honour, what a happiness is here promised us; if our Lord, at his coming, shall find us watching. He *will gird himself*, to be ready to wait upon us: *he will make us fit down to table*; and *he will pass and minister to us.* O what incomprehensible joys are here signified, by our Lord's *ministering to us*; by his making himself, as it were, over to us, to be perpetually enjoyed by us! O what a table is this, at which we shall be invited to sit down, to be eternally entertained by him, with all the delights of heaven; with the sweet fruits of the tree of life, and the delicious waters of the fountain of life! And lest we should be discouraged, with the apprehension of our being excluded from this eternal banquet, because we have already passed a good part of our lives, without being in that readiness, which our Lord expects of us, at the time of his coming: he adds for our comfort, that *if he shall come in the second watch, or if he shall come in the third watch*; and shall then find us watching, *we shall still be happy.* *Blessed, saith he, are those servants.* So that, if we have hitherto been careless; if we have let the first, or even the second watch pass, without being upon our guard; and he has been so good

good as not to come and surprize us ; let us how at least awake, let us gird our loins now, and have our lamps, for the future, burning in our hands : and we may still be blessed.

Consider 3dly, the remaining words of this Gospel. *But this know ye, saith our Lord, that if the householder did know, at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready: for at what hour you think not, the son of man will come.* This is that great lesson, of always watching, which our Saviour perpetually inculcates; as our only security against the dreadful evil of an unprovided death; and all those endless evils, which are the unhappy consequences of an unprovided death. O let us lay up this lesson in our hearts; let us meditate daily upon it; let us conform ourselves to it in the practice of our lives. O let us always watch ! Our Lord, who has borne with us all this year, has in the mean time knocked at the door of thousands of others; who this day twelve-month, were as likely to live as ourselves. Their bodies are now corrupting in their graves : but O where are their souls ? And where shall our bodies ; where shall our souls be, a twelve-month hence ? Let us then be always ready ; because we know not the day, nor the hour, when our Lord will come.

Conclude to observe well these evangelical prescriptions, of *girding your loins*, of *having your lamps ever burning in your hands* ; and of being always waiting for *your Lord*, and always ready to open the door to him : and you shall not fail of being of the number of those happy servants, who shall enter into the eternal joy of *their Lord*.

END OF VOL. IV.



